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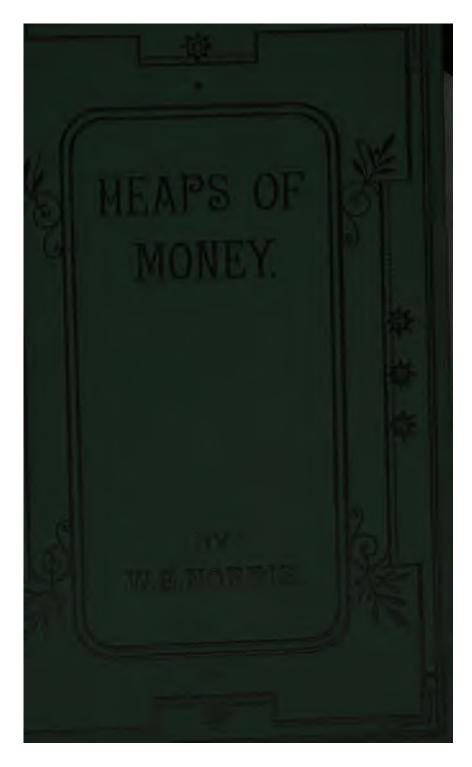
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HEAPS OF MONEY

FIRST VOLUME



HEAPS OF MONEY

BY

W. E. NORRIS

'Multa petentibus Desunt multa: bene est cui deus obtulit Parca quod satis est manu'

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.



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'b HEAPS OF MONEY.

CHAPTER I.

HERR EICHMANN'S TENANTS.

It is now rather more than ten years since the inhabitants of the sleepy little village of Blasewitz, near Dresden, were startled by the intelligence that an Englishman, named Howard, had taken Herr Eichmann's house by the river for a year certain, with option of renewal.

Blasewitz, known by name to readers of 'Wallenstein's Lager'—who will recollect 'die Gustel aus Blasewitz'—known by sight, too, to many a holiday tourist, is a favourite summer resort among the worthy Dresdeners; and by such Herr Eichmann's roomy but somewhat dilapidated habitation, with its spacious, scantily

furnished rooms, its neglected garden, cool with the shade of fruit trees, and its lawn sloping down to the swift-flowing Elbe, had been frequently occupied during the hot months, and found not unworthy of the modest rent demanded for it. But that so lonely and draughty an abode should have been chosen by anybody—above all by a foreigner—as a winter residence, appeared to Blasewitz an astonishing thing, and one requiring explanation.

Herr Eichmann, when questioned by the cronies with whom he was wont to enjoy his evening pipe and beer, had no very flattering account to give of his tenants.

'A clever gentleman,' he would say, 'and one who speaks German nearly as well as I do; but over sharp in matters of business. He has got the house for nothing—absolutely for nothing! A well-mannered gentleman, I grant you—"Lieber Herr" here, "Mein bester Herr Eichmann" there!—always smiling and polite, and always with a good cigar at your service; not like an Englishman at all, in short. But,

for my part, I prefer the others, with their rude ways and their guineas, to this plausible Herr Howard, with his cigars and his empty purse. I am out of pocket by him—many thalers out of pocket; but at least he will keep the house aired; and that is something.'

And Herr Eichmann, who was a well-to-do brewer, would heave a fat sigh, and gulp down a huge draught of his own excellent beer, having in no wise lessened the wonderment of his friends by his description of the stranger. For in some of the less frequented villages of Europe there still lingers a remnant of the once prevalent notion that every Englishman is a millionaire.

As the season advanced, and Blasewitz put on its white winter garb, and blocks of ice came swirling down the brown current of the Elbe, and icicles hung from every roof, the forms of Mr. Howard and the one daughter who constituted all his family became familiar objects to the villagers. He, tall, well dressed, and of benevolent appearance, the venerable aspect imparted to him by his white hair and

moustache losing nothing by a certain erect jauntiness of carriage; she, youthful, pretty, and bright-eyed, always ready with a pleasant word or two in response to the gruff 'Guten Morgen' of the peasants—such were the Herr Engländer and his daughter as Blasewitz saw them, nearly every morning, trudging away towards Dresden over the silent snow. The young lady sometimes carried her skates in her hand, sometimes a roll of music under her arm. It was understood that her education was not yet completed, and that she was taking music lessons from one of the numerous professors of that art residing in the capital.

Those who felt any further curiosity as to the habits of Herr Eichmann's tenants (and there were a good many such) had only to apply to Christine, the cook, or Lieschen, the housemaid, in order to obtain the desired information. The two women required no great pressing to state their knowledge and opinion of their new master and mistress. They joined in shrill praise of Fräulein Linda. Never, so they said, was there a young lady more kind, gracious, and affable. Then she was so clever! She made all her dresses with her own fingers, could cook a dinner as well as if she had done nothing else all her life, and had managed somehow to arrange and refurbish the shabby. old furniture of the drawing-room with such skill that no one would have known it again. And with all that she found time to play the piano like an angel. But Mr. Howard, it appeared, was a somewhat alarming Herr. He was the strictest of disciplinarians; nothing escaped his notice; and the smallest shortcoming was sure to be visited upon the delinquent by a steady, silent look, far more terrible than any loud scolding—a look which, as Lieschen said, was enough to make one scream with fright, and drop any plates or dishes one might happen to have in one's hands at the time. Once, when Christine had unfortunately sent up the dinner cold, she had been summoned to a short private interview with her master, whence she had emerged bathed in tears, and casting herself upon one of the kitchen chairs,

had declared that she had never been subjected to such treatment before in her life.

'What did he do? What did he say to you?' the sympathetic Lieschen had inquired.

'Oh, he did not say much,' the other had sobbed out; 'but—but he looked at me!"

In truth Mr. Howard's rather prominent blue eyes could assume a sufficiently truculent expression upon occasion. Probably his method of dealing with his inferiors was the result of study and experience: it was, at all events, successful. His house was better kept and his dinners were better served than those of many a richer man; and, as time went on, it became conceivable that his extreme fastidiousness as to his food was prompted not only by mere carnal appetite, but by the nobler motive of a desire to make his house agreeable to his guests. For, before the winter was over, Mr. Howard took to bringing back a friend pretty frequently to dinner from Dresden. Sometimes two, and, upon rare occasions, even three gentlemen would thus partake of Mr. Howard's hospitality. The Fräulein always

went to bed at ten o'clock, and usually the guests remained for another hour or so, playing cards with the master of the house; but they kept early hours, leaving, for the most part, before midnight.

What struck Lieschen as a singular circumstance was that Mr. Howard's visitors should be invariably Germans. Seeing how large an English colony was established in Dresden, it would have been natural to expect that some among its members would have found their way to call upon their countryman at Blasewitz; but none came, nor, with the exception of one or two neighbours who thought it incumbent upon them to pay a visit of ceremony to the new arrivals, did any lady, English or German, ever cross the threshold. Howard's acquaintance did not seem to extend much beyond the officers of the Garde-Reiter, or Body-Guard-blue and silver warriors, with ringing spurs, floating blonde whiskers, and an unquenchable thirst for beer. It was for the benefit of these gentlemen that Christine was expected to produce unpretentious but artistic little dinners.

At length, however, an exception to the rule presented itself in the person of an Englishman, whose visits, at first short and far between, gradually increased in length and frequency, till it became a matter of course that he should present himself every day at the old house at Blasewitz. This Englishman, being the possessor of a name utterly beyond Lieschen's powers of pronunciation, was known and spoken of by her under no other appellation than that of 'He with the Violin.'

He with the Violin was, as his designation suggested, a person of a musical turn; and it was community of taste, no doubt, that had first attracted him to Miss Howard; for it was rather to her than to her father that his visits were paid. He and the young lady used to strum and scrape away in concert by the hour together, and ere long the violin was permanently installed in a corner of the drawing-room, whence its owner came to take it, every day, with praiseworthy regularity.

The winter passed away; the snow vanished; the sun shone down upon snowdrops and

crocuses and hedges sprinkled with touches of green; and He with the Violin gave up walking out along the high road to Blasewitz, as he had · hitherto been in the habit of doing, and took instead to pulling up the river, against the current, in a light English-built boat which he had discovered at Dresden, and landing at the end of Mr. Howard's garden. Was it love of music alone that induced him to take so much Lieschen thought she had detected trouble? symptoms of another incentive, and laughed to herself, over her washing and scrubbing, as she noticed how, day by day, the sound of the instruments in the drawing-room grew less frequent, and the pauses for conversation longer. Yet, if she could have heard and understood all that passed in the long tête-à-tête interviews between her young mistress and the Englishman, she would have found more familiar friendliness and less approach to love-making therein than she would have expected.

On a beautiful spring afternoon the two above-mentioned people, having diligently worked at their respective instruments for more than an hour, were enjoying an interval of deserved repose.

The violinist was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a handsome sun-burnt face and closecropped hair and beard. His age did not appear to be above thirty, or thirty-five at most; yet he could hardly have been described as exactly a young man. His clothes were well cut, because he employed a good tailor; but the condition of his boots, necktie, and such small accessories of dress plainly showed that the subject of personal appearance did not occupy a large share of his time or attention. From this carelessness of attire, and from a certain far-away look in his sleepy grey eyes, it was easy to guess that he belonged to that class of mortals who frequently wear their hats wrong side before, generally leave their keys behind them when they start on a journey, and wear beards to save their features from the mutilations of the erratic razor. Such, in fact, was the character which this gentleman bore in Mr. Howard's household. He was always in the clouds-zwischen Himmel und Erde, to use the expression of Lieschen, who rather revered this absent-mindedness, taking it as a sure indication of genius.

'The Herr has much talent: he will be a great man one of these days,' Lieschen would sometimes assert; 'but he is no more able to take care of himself than a baby. What he most wants now is a wife to look after him.'

The manner in which good-natured Lieschen hoped that this deficiency might be supplied has been already hinted at; and, if physical beauty be a desideratum in a wife, certainly no man could have gone far wrong in fixing his choice upon Linda Howard. Beauty, as we all know, is very much a question of taste, Providence having-doubtless with a view to the prevention of awkward complications-implanted in the breast of every man his own peculiar standard of excellence in this matter; but there are certain faces—not usually the most correct in outline—which all the world is agreed in admiring; and it was Miss Howard's good fortune to be the owner of one of these. She was just eighteen at this time, and in some respects looked less than her age. That is to

say, the contour of her face was almost childish, and her figure had not yet entirely freed itself from the angularities of girlhood. But there was a gravity in her expression and a staid selfpossession in her demeanour rather pathetic, as seeming to show that the cares and anxieties of this world had reached her at a time when Nature intends young people to be free from such troubles. She looked like a child when she laughed, but like a woman when her face was in repose. A low broad forehead, surmounted by masses of golden-brown hair, a pair of soft hazel eves, and a double row of the whitest teeth in the world—here are materials enough out of which to construct a pretty face; but it was expression rather than beauty of feature that caused people to grow enthusiastic over Linda Howard. Innocence, honesty, friendliness seemed to look out at you from the depths of those gentle brown eyes, and sometimes a touch of sadness withal, which was apt to go straight to the hearts of the male sex in a very dangerous, and perhaps rather deceptive manner: for in truth Linda's troubles were not

of a romantic kind. But how should susceptible German youths know that? How could they guess, when Miss Howard sat lost in thought, as she sometimes did, looking like a sad little maiden from one of Greuze's pictures, that the subject of her meditations was the butcher or the grocer? Thus, without any evil intention, the fair young Engländerin made sad havoc among the Saxon Garde-Reiter.

It was not, however, of Linda, nor of the snowy-blossomed cherry-trees beyond the open window, nor of the hills on the other side of the Elbe upon which his eyes were fixed, that He with the Violin was thinking. The objects reflected on his retina did not reach his brain, or failed to create any impression there; for his thoughts were elsewhere.

'It is no use,' he was saying; 'I am one of those unlucky fellows who can succeed in almost anything up to a certain point—and no farther. Sometimes I think I will "hang up the fiddle and the bow," and never play another note as long as I live.'

'But you play very well indeed, said Linda.

- 'Yes, I play very well. So do several score of other men in Dresden alone. But my ambition is to play the violin more than very well; and that I shall never do. It is excessively disagreeable, do you know, to desire a thing with all one's heart and soul, to understand it and see the way to it, and to know that by no amount of labour can one ever get it! Fortunately for the human race, very few people care intensely for what is beyond their reach. I wonder, now, whether you ever wanted anything very much.'
- 'Oh, yes,' said the girl, letting her fingers wander absently over the keys; 'I want money.'
- 'Money! that is what you are always saying. Surely you might wish for something better worth having than that. So long as one has a roof over one's head, clothes to wear, and food to eat, what more does one want?'
- 'Ah, you do not know what it is to feel the want of money,' said Linda.
 - 'Indeed I do.'
 - 'That means that you can't buy the best

cigars always, or drink champagne every day; I don't call that feeling the want of money. Poverty like ours means something far worse. It means perpetual pinching, scraping, worrying, degradation, and vulgarity.'

'Poverty is not vulgar,' said the violinist, sententiously.

'Perhaps not in theory; but practically, poor people—at any rate, people as poor as we are—have to associate with vulgar men and women, and put up with vulgar affronts; yes, and do vulgar things, too, sometimes.'

Linda rose, walked to the window, which opened down to the ground, and stood, half in half out of the room, leaning against the window-frame, and looking out dreamily at the sunny landscape.

'Yes,' she said, 'I want money—heaps of money! Think of what it would bring! Horses and a French cook for papa; a maid and a box at the opera for me; and society, and balls, and flowers, and travelling—in short, everything that is delightful! Do you mean to say all that is not worth having?'

- 'If you had those things you would want something else. It is not in the nature of man to be contented; and there is no greater mistake than to suppose that riches bring happiness.'
- 'How can you tell?' said Linda, quickly; 'you have not tried them.'

The philosophical musician smiled.

- 'I have seen the effect of them upon others,' he answered. 'My father, for instance, who has what I suppose you would call "heaps of money," is about as dissatisfied a man as I know.'
- 'Your father, Mr. Mainwairing?' said the girl, her face lighting up with interest and curiosity; 'I did not know you had a father living. Why did you never mention him before?'
- 'Well, it is not a particularly pleasant subject to me,' answered Mr. Mainwairing; 'you see, we have never got on very well together; and I have not even seen him for two years now.'
- 'Have you quarrelled with him?' asked Linda, in a rather awe-struck tone.

'Oh, no; but we found we could not meet without disagreeing; so it is as well that we should remain apart. The fact is that I have been a disappointment to him—one of his many disappointments, poor old man! My brother, who will inherit his estates and the greater part of his money, has been a terrible disappoint-Instead of going into Parliament, making a good marriage, and taking the hounds, as of course he ought to have done, he has gone in for science and chemistry, and spends all his life in his laboratory, except when he blows himself up-which he does periodically—and has to go to bed for a few weeks. Then, I was to have had my choice between diplomacy and the Guards, but I declined to enter any profession, and took to wandering about the Continent, and studying music. believe my father looks upon me as the greater sinner of the two. He says a man who plays the fiddle is only one degree above a counterjumper. He has had other troubles, too, besides his sons having turned out so badly. For one thing, he had always understood that he

was to have the peerage which was as good as promised to my grandfather, but somehow they have never offered it to him, and that has soured him a good deal.'

- 'I don't think I should care much about that,' said Linda.
- 'No, but he does. It is his desire to be Lord Mainwairing, just as it is mine to become a second Paganini, and yours to be a female Rothschild.'

Linda was silent for a few minutes.

'Well,' she said at last, 'I suppose rich people are often unhappy; but you will not convince me that it is not a great misfortune to be poor. Oh, money, dear money! how I love you!'

Mr. Mainwairing laughed.

- 'Why do you laugh?' asked Linda, turning upon him suddenly, with a little gathering cloud of anger on her brow.
- 'I laugh,' replied Mr. Mainwairing, 'because it is better to laugh than to groan, and because I must do one or the other when I hear a girl of your age, with health, and talents, and—and

beauty, making herself miserable for the want of pounds, shillings, and pence.'

'But I don't make myself miserable,' said Linda; 'no one can accuse me of not putting a good face upon my troubles, and I have more troubles than you know of. Only I have my longings, and you have yours—why not?'

'The difference between us,' said Mainwairing, 'is that wishing to be a great musician can never do me any possible harm, whereas love of money may lead you—who knows where? Perhaps into marrying a doddering old man, with one foot in the grave, for the sake of his wealth.'

'It would be a great temptation,' said Linda, gravely; 'particularly if his other foot were likely to follow soon.'

'How disgusting,' exclaimed Mr. Mainwairing, with unusual emphasis.

Linda coloured, and for a moment looked more than half disposed to quarrel with her friend; but she thought better of it, and broke instead into a peal of ringing laughter, in which Mr. Mainwairing presently joined, though with hardly equal heartiness. Their merriment was checked by the entrance of Mr. Howard.

'How are you, Mainwairing?' said he, in a loud, cheery voice. 'Come to dinner, I hope?'

'Oh, thanks,' said Mr. Mainwairing, hesitatingly; 'you are very kind, but I am afraid I must be off.'

He was not very fond of Mr. Howard, and, in truth, few of the people who enjoyed the privilege of that gentleman's acquaintance were The members of the English club at Dresden had unanimously voted him a 'thundering cad,' and had shown him the cold shoulder ever since his first appearance among them. Yet, though it would have been impossible to have pronounced him a perfect gentleman, the man could not fairly be said to belong to the species ordinarily stigmatised as I am afraid that if his position in life had been different—if, for instance, he had been an M.P., with several thousands a year (as he might easily have been but for certain accidents), he would have been thought a very

good sort of fellow in his way. Under no circumstances, perhaps, would he have had many intimate friends; but had he been possessed of wealth and rank, it is probable that the world would have submitted to his rather noisy familiarity, his boastfulness and self-assertion, with as much philosophy as it is accustomed to display at the dinner-tables of a thousand other equally offensive members of society. Being, however, what he was—a wandering, out-at-elbows Englishman, his compatriots looked upon him with no favouring eye, and, for the most part, declined to acknowledge the existence of his daughter.

Mr. Howard had started in life under sufficiently favourable auspices. The son of a rich woolstapler, he had been educated at Eton and Christchurch, at which latter place of learning he had made many distinguished acquaintances, had acquired what for one of his years was a very creditable knowledge of whist and écarté, and had learnt to spend money in a noble and reckless fashion. At the conclusion of his university career he was placed, not without pro-

testation on his part, in his father's office. Old Mr. Howard pulled a long face over the heavy bills which came dropping in from time to time in his son's name; but he paid them all, remarking, with a sigh, that boys would be boys, and that every man must sow his wild oats. the same time the young man was given to understand that the sowing of wild oats must now give place to the cultivation of more profitable crops, and that he would be expected for the future to keep within the limits of the very liberal allowance assigned to him. To this admonition he chose to pay no attention whatever. He neglected his work, spent the greater part of his time at race meetings, and finally, after an unlucky week at Newmarket, found himself compelled to inform his father that unless five thousand pounds were forthcoming on the following morning he would be a ruined and disgraced man. Mr. Howard senior was a shortnecked, choleric gentleman of the old school. He paid over the money, cursed his first-born with much elaboration of diction, and requested him never to darken his doors again.

'You have thrown away your chance,' said he; 'and now your brother will take your place. Henceforth four hundred pounds will be paid to your bankers annually on your account, and a sum sufficient to produce the same amount, at the usual rate of interest, will be handed to you at my death. You will never get anything more, so you need not trouble yourself to ask. My servants have orders to prevent you from entering my house after to-day. Now be off!'

Mr. Howard went off accordingly, and was never re-admitted under the paternal roof, though he did subsequently make some efforts in that direction. He went abroad, and for many years was a well-known figure at Rome and Florence during the winter, and at Homburg or Baden during the summer months. He managed, by cards and billiards, or otherwise, so far to increase his income as to be able to live at the best hotels in these places, and to lead a life not differing outwardly from that of the richer men with whom he associated; and, upon the whole, passed a fairly merry and agreeable ex-

istence. It was not until his father had been long dead, and he himself was upon the confines of middle age, that he committed his crowning act of folly. This was a runaway marriage with Lady Helen Blount, the plainfeatured daughter of the Earl of Sturdham, whose acquaintance Mr. Howard chanced to make at Rome, where she was spending the Much to the surprise and chagrin of the mature bridegroom, Lord Sturdham refused absolutely to hold any communication with his son-in-law, and held to this resolution till his dying day. Mr. Howard not only gained nothing by what he had intended for a clever stroke of business, but found himself encumbered with a wife, and eventually with a daughter, whose support became a problem not easy for him to solve. Meek Lady Helen, wandering over Europe with her husband, struggling with penury, receiving little but neglect and hard usage, and falling in with many queer associates, may have often had cause to repent her choice; but, if so, she kept her regrets to herself. syllable of complaint was ever heard to pass her

lips, and up to her death, which occurred within six years of her marriage, she continued to show herself the best and most patient of wives.

It is unnecessary to follow the widower and his little daughter through their drifting voyage across the more or less turbulent waters, which, driving them now here, now there, had at last stranded them for a time upon the tranquil shores of Blasewitz. Given a roving gentleman of not over-scrupulous character and predatory instincts sharpened by necessity, and it is not difficult to form a guess as to the probable manner of his life. Mr. Howard's finances were subject to sudden and violent fluctuations. Sometimes he would be found living in comfort, and even with a certain amount of modest luxury, at Paris, Berlin, or Vienna; anon he had vanished, leaving many creditors to deplore his loss. Then, before the memory of him was well out of men's minds, or his bad debts crossed out of his tradesmen's books, he would re-appear, smiling and genial as ever, pay his bills, and recommence his former mode of living. This system worked satisfactorily for a longer



period than might have been expected; but a protracted course of such irregularities must needs tell upon a man's character in the long run, and as the years went on, Mr. Howard fell perceptibly in the social scale. Respectable people fought shy of him; hotel-keepers gave him a chill welcome, and British matrons declined to occupy a place at the table d'hôte next to 'that disreputable person.' was nothing definite to be urged against the He had never been caught cheating at cards, though perhaps it would be asserting too much to say that he had never been suspected of so doing; he was not known to have committed any offence against the law, yet there was no lack of people ready to affirm that he dared not show his face in England. 'The fellow is an adventurer,' these well-informed persons would say, cautioning the unwary against being drawn into an intimacy with him; 'and the less you have to do with him the better.'

Recognising this hostile disposition on the part of his compatriots, Mr. Howard gradually

ceased to seek their society, and withdrew more and more into the companionship of foreigners, by whom he was more cordially received. liked, if possible, to have a few English acquaintances in a place, for the sake of appearances; but if he found himself repulsed by these, he turned smilingly away, and, like the immortal Major O'Gahagan, 'shut himself up in the impregnable fortress of Dunkeradam.' Foreign Counts, Princes, and high nobly-born Herren liked him very well. A certain loudness of voice and rakishness of demeanour did not jar upon their nerves as they did upon those of Englishmen; his frequent allusions to my 'brother-in-law, Lord Sturdham,' were held to be a sufficient guarantee that he was what he represented himself to be-a gentleman of ancient lineage; he was a good shot and a lively companion. And then his daughter was so charming! Graf von Podewitz, Freiherr von Oberndorf, and several others of Mr. Howard's friends among the Saxon Garde-Reiter, had already been vanquished by the witchery of Linda's bright eyes, and thought the small sums which



their amiable host was wont to win from them at cards, after each of his sociable little dinners. by no means too long a price to pay for the felicity of passing a few hours in her company. It must not, however, be supposed that any smoking, drinking, or card-playing went on in Linda's presence. Mr. Howard, whose most ardent wish it was that his daughter should make a good marriage, was fully alive to the necessity of enforcing a respectful demeanour towards her on the part of all the men frequenting his house, and knew that, in his somewhat equivocal position, too much care could not be exercised to ensure this result. Punctually at ten o'clock, therefore, Linda took up her bedroom candlestick and bade her father's guests good night. She was not allowed to see very much of these gentlemen, nor was she ever left alone in their company for more than five minutes at a time. In the case of Mr. Mainwairing, as we have seen, a much greater amount of freedom was permitted to her; but then Mainwairing was an Englishman; and that, as Mr. Howard conceived, made all the difference. He was not ill pleased at the intimacy which had sprung up between Linda and the young man whom he had discovered to be the second son of a wealthy Staffordshire baronet, and sometimes cherished a hope that this friendship, brought about by a common love of music, might terminate in the establishment of his daughter in a position of ease and high respectability.

Within the whole wide range of creation there was no single person or thing that Mr. Howard loved with anything approaching to the same intensity as he loved himself. Nevertheless, in so far as he was capable of feeling attachment to any mortal, he did care for Linda. He had given her a good education; he had sedulously striven to keep her free from contact with his own doubtful associates; he had endeavoured, by every means in his power, to bring her under the influence of irreproachable ladies of her own nation; often, with a humility not devoid of pathos, abstaining from intruding himself upon the society of these virtuous persons, lest his presence, which he knew to be

distasteful to them, should prejudice his daughter in their eyes. All this he had done; and though, as has been hinted above, the smile which Mr. Howard usually wore before the outside world was apt to change into a menacing frown if his dinner were ill cooked or the meagre sum allotted by him to the payment of household expenses exceeded, he had not been, upon the whole, an unkind father. The man could not have been altogether bad, or how should Linda have loved and reverenced him as she did? In her eyes, her father was all that is lovable and admirable. She saw that he was looked upon coldly here and there; but this she attributed solely to his poverty, which she imagined—perhaps not wholly without reason—to be the one unpardonable crime of which an Englishman can be guilty. this broken-down old rascal was a noble. talented, and fascinating gentleman-and who could wish her to think otherwise? and fallacies are not without their uses in this world; and though Truth is a divinity which we are all bound to revere, I don't know that

one is always the happier for having made her acquaintance. Mr. Howard, who had been of a practical turn from his youth upwards, and who was not given to the cherishing of illusions upon any subject, had long since arrived at as correct an estimate of his daughter's good qualities as his nature admitted of. He thought her a good girl, cheerful in disposition, clever in the management of money, and—what was most important of all—undeniably pretty. was gratifying to him to have such a daughter in his house: but it would have occasioned him no sort of grief to part with her. On the contrary, he asked for nothing better than to resign her to the care of a husband of good family. and comfortable income; and, in the absence of any more eligible suitor, he was disposed to be very civil to Mr. Mainwairing, though he had no great personal liking for the violinist, and suspected that his antipathy was more than reciprocated.

He therefore reiterated his invitation to dinner, and pressed the point so strongly that Mainwairing, having, in truth, no valid excuse to put forward, was compelled at length to murmur an acceptance. It was the first time that he had broken bread in Mr. Howard's house, though by no means the first time that he had been begged to do so.

Mr. Howard, unlike the generality of Englishmen, made it a rule to conform, as far as possible, to the customs of the country in which he might happen to be residing; for he rightly thought that only in this way could a reasonable amount of comfort be secured. In accordance with this principle, he was in the habit, now that Fate had landed him in North Germany, of dining at the astonishing hour of half-past five.

- 'Sorry to have to ask you to sit down to dinner in the middle of the afternoon, Mainwairing,' he said; 'but when one is in Germany one must do as the Germans do, you know.'
- 'It is all a matter of habit,' answered Mainwairing. 'At the Hôtel Bellevue we dine at five o'clock; and, upon my word, I think it is a very good hour.'
 - 'Yes, yes,' assented Mr. Howard; 'habit is

everything, as you say; an old traveller, like myself, gets accustomed to all sorts of queer things. Gad! we should make them stare at the club at home, though, if we asked for dinner at five o'clock, shouldn't we?'

'Oh, I don't know,' said Mainwairing, who never for the life of him could help disagreeing with Mr. Howard; 'I fancy it would take a good deal to astonish a club waiter. Which is your club, by-the-by?'

Mr. Howard quite understood the insinuation veiled under this query. 'The Buckingham,' he replied, meekly; and indeed it was true that, even in his most impecunious years, the exile had always managed to remit his annual subscription to that exclusive establishment. 'I used to belong to half-a-dozen others,' he continued, enjoying his small triumph; 'but I have given them up, one by one. As a man gets older he finds one club about as much as he wants. And they give you a very fair dinner at the Buckingham.'

'Very fair! Why, they have the best cook in London,' said Mainwairing. And he thought VOL. I.

to himself, 'What an egregious old humbug you are! I don't believe you belong there at all.'

'Ah! well, you'll have a precious bad dinner to-night, I'm afraid,' said Mr. Howard. 'There's no use in trying to get these German servants to understand cooking. But I can give you a bottle of pretty good Hochheimer, if you care about Rhine wine.'

'Oh, I'm not particular,' answered Mainwairing, a little ungraciously. 'Would you mind trying over that passage once more, Miss Howard, before we put the violin into its case again?'

Linda seated herself obediently before the piano, and music took the place of conversation till dinner was announced. Surely Mr. Howard must have foreseen the presence of a third person at his table that evening. Surely so simple and yet so perfect a dinner as that which was presently served in Herr Eichmann's old-fashioned dining-room could not have been altogether unpremeditated. Mr. Mainwairing, who, for all his declaration that he was not

particular, appreciated good cooking as much as anybody else, allowed some such suspicion to cross his mind as he helped himself to mayonnaise, and wondered whether this impecunious Englishman and his daughter fared as sumptuously every day. And then, since one form of suspicion naturally begets another, he began to ask himself what could be the cause of all this civility on the part of a man to whom he had always been rather persistently rude; and even went so far as to select the exact terms in which he proposed to refuse the loan which he imagined that his host might probably request of him before the evening was over.

But he dismissed such unworthy thoughts after a time. Mainwairing, albeit an abstemious man, was no more insensible to the effects of a bottle of excellent Hochheimer than the rest of humanity; and by the time that he was sitting in the garden before the house, sipping his café noir and smoking a capital cigar which Mr. Howard had handed to him, his views of the world in general were several degrees brighter than they had been earlier in the afternoon.

Musical proficiency no longer seemed so utterly beyond his reach; his host's familiarity and vulgarity appeared to have diminished; and as for Linda—well, she was always, and under any circumstances, a beautiful girl; but had she ever looked so lovely as she now did, sitting with her hands clasped loosely in her lap—somewhat quiet and silent, as she generally was in her father's presence—the last rays of the sun turning her golden-brown hair into a glory?

The cherry-blossoms were flushed with the glow of the dying day; the river, sweeping out from the dusky shadow of its banks, caught flecks of gold from the western sky; the hills beyond lay bathed in ruddy light, and all the earth was sleeping in the dreamy stillness of evening. Mr. Mainwairing, furtively watching Linda from beneath his half-closed eyelids, fell into a reverie, and began building all manner of preposterous castles in the air, while Mr. Howard, loquacious after his Rhine wine, poured forth into inattentive ears a monotonous stream of egotistical anecdote about the Court balls at

Vienna, and hunting on the Roman Campagna, and my brother-in-law, Lord Sturdham. Suddenly a quick movement from Linda brought the dreamer back to earth again.

- 'Mr. Mainwairing,' said she, 'you promised to take me out in your boat some day. Shall we go now; or are you too lazy to row after dinner?'
- 'I'm not too lazy at all,' answered Mainwairing, 'and I should like it of all things. But are you not afraid of the cold?'
- 'It won't be much colder on the river than it is here,' said Linda. 'Besides, I can wrap myself up. May we go, papa?'
- 'Eh? Go out for a pull? Well, upon my word, I don't think it's a bad idea,' said Mr. Howard, who was in a gracious humour.
- 'What do you say, Mainwairing? You won't have to do all the work, you know; I can take an oar. I used to be pretty good at that kind of thing when I was at Oxford Indeed, I believe I might have been in the University eight if I had cared about it; but I couldn't stand the nuisance of training, you

know. What sort of a tub have you got hold of? Nothing much smaller than a barge, I suppose?'

'The boat is Thames-built,' said Mainwairing, getting up and stretching himself. 'Good enough for me. I never was even in my College crew myself.' And as they walked slowly down to the river bank he thought, 'Ought I to ask him to pull stroke? I wouldn't mind giving odds that he doesn't know an oar from a scull. Still one must be civil.'

But when Linda had seated herself upon the cushions, and gathered up the tiller-cords under her arms, Mr. Mainwairing thought, No, by Jove! he wouldn't; and, seating himself opposite to her, allowed his venerable friend to scramble into the bows.

Mr. Howard was not at all offended. He much preferred that the young people should have an opportunity of conversing together than that he should be placed facing his daughter, to whom he could hardly be expected to have much to talk about. In order to show that his presence need not be regarded as any obstacle

to confidential intercourse, he made a great show of withdrawing into a state of mental abstraction, and whistled La Donna è Mobile out of tune, while he drew his oar jerkily through the water in what he imagined to be perfect unison with Mainwairing's measured stroke. Now, the Elbe runs pretty strongly in the neighbourhood of Blasewitz, and a man pulling against the stream might find a better use for his breath than to expend it in whistling. Linda very soon perceived an unaccountable disposition on the part of the boat's nose to slew round on the side of her father's oar. By way of counteracting this tendency she waited till they were very nearly at right angles with the stream, and then took a vigorous pull at her stroke side tiller-cord, continuing to tug at it till she had altered her course, say from S. by E. to N.N.E. This appeared to her to establish a just equilibrium, and to fulfil the essential functions of a coxswain. It also gave Mr. Howard the occasion to call out good-humouredly, 'Hullo, Mainwairing! pulling you round, eh? Upon my word, I'm not so rusty as I thought I was!'

When this manœuvre had been executed some half-dozen times, and had elicited an equal number of observations similar to the above, Mainwairing felt that he must either stop rowing or give way to bad language. Remembering the presence of Linda, he very properly chose the former alternative.

'Don't you think this is rather poor fun after dinner, Mr. Howard?' he said. 'Suppose, instead of struggling against the current, we let ourselves drift down to Dresden? We might go and listen to the band for a bit, and you could drive home later.'

'Oh, yes!' exclaimed Linda, 'that would be delightful. But I don't know whether we can,' she added, checking herself. 'It would make us so late; and papa has letters to write.'

Which meant that Linda had grave doubts as to whether papa would relish paying the fare of a droschke back to Blasewitz. She need not, however, have felt alarmed. Papa was in one of his most amiable moods that evening.

'Anything you and Mainwairing please, my dear,' he said, benevolently. 'My letters can wait.'

So they swung round with the stream, and floating smoothly down through the fast-falling night, had soon left the vine-covered hills of Löschwitz behind them, and were in sight of the twinkling lights of Dresden. Mainwairing brought his boat alongside of the landing-steps and helped Linda to step out. Directly above them towered the illuminated Brühlische Terrasse, the fashionable promenade of Dresden, whence came the faint sounds of a distant band, the hum of voices, and the crunching of many footsteps on the gravel. It was one of the first warm evenings of the year, and all the worthy citizens and their families had turned out to enjoy it.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE BRÜHLISCHE TERRASSE.

Dresden, like most of the smaller German cities, has seen its best, or at all events its most brilliant days. It is a tolerably bright and prosperous little town at the present time; but some faint shadow of the departed glories of the last century hangs over its castles and palaces—so much too vast for the requirements of the diminished Court, with its circle of sober officials and modest retinue of canary-clad footmen-and pervades the place with a certain melancholy. Even after the lapse of close upon a century and a half the town and its neighbourhood are full of the echoes of the hunting-parties and fêtes and other splendid entertainments with which Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and first Saxon King of Poland, was wont to delight neighbouring potentates. Dresden's days of glory-socially speaking—came to an end very shortly after the death of this stalwart monarch; and the town still seems to wear a decent sort of half-mourning for him, much as Versailles does for Louisle-Grand. There is a statue of him in the Neustadt, in which he is represented bareheaded and mounted upon a rampant carthorse—in so great a hurry to gallop off to his new Polish dominions, say the Dresdeners in their humorous way, that he has forgotten to take his hat with him. No doubt the Saxons are well rid of their debauched Hercules, who must have been very expensive to support during his lifetime, and whose only claim to the distinction of a statue seems to have been his power to break a horse-shoe in halves with his hands, to bend a broad silver piece between his finger and thumb, and to spend an unlimited amount of money; but they are proud of having produced him, for all that, and cherish a sneaking kindness for his memory. In truth it is much easier to forget a good man than an

Prime Minister Count von extravagant one. Brühl, for instance, who, by all accounts, was neither good, great, nor wise, has left his mark upon Dresden in an unmistakable manner, and will be remembered there, in all probability, for centuries yet to come, by reason of the palace and shady gardens, overlooking the Elbe, which still bear the name of their former owner. though they have long since been thrown open to the public. One can fancy the little man strutting along his newly-planned walks in his fine clothes—(he had a suit for every day in the year, they say)—and the herd of powdered and bedizened sycophants trooping after him, and the honest burghers staring open-mouthed at their gorgeous ruler.

A far less picturesque assemblage congregates on the Brühlische Terrasse, on warm evenings, in these latter times. Long-haired students saunter arm-in-arm down the gravel walks and stare through their spectacles or *pince-nez* at the homely servant-girls who are flirting with diminutive soldiers in sky-blue tunics with white facings; smooth-shaven tradesmen, with

their wives and children, elbow countesses whose coats of arms show sixteen quarterings; officers with trailing sabres and murderous spurs stroll up and down, not unconscious of the admiring attention they excite; and of course the itinerant Britisher, in his shooting-coat and pot-hat, is not wanting.

Through such a crowd did Mr. Howard, Linda, and Mainwairing make their way after they had ascended the broad flight of steps which leads up from the river's bank; and reaching the garden of the Café Belvedere, at the end of the terrace, where the band was playing, were admitted, on payment of a few groschen, into the enclosure.

'Now, this is the sort of thing I enjoy,' said Mr. Howard, passing his arm familiarly through that of his companion; and I daresay he would have been very much astonished if he could have known what angry and unchristian feelings were aroused in Mr. Mainwairing's breast by this simple action. 'What I like about the Continent is the freedom from restraint—the sans gêne and the out-of-door life. If we could

give our working classes at home some amusement of this kind, we should not hear of half the drunken assaults and wife-beatings that make us a byword among the nations now. Look at these good people here. Give 'em a glass of beer, a pipe, and a good band, and they're as happy as kings. Depend upon it, Mainwairing, there's nothing like music to refine and civilise a man. Good music, of course, I mean—Haydn and Beethoven and—and the rest of 'em—not your rubbishing waltzes and polkas,' says Mr. Howard, who would have been puzzled to distinguish between Mozart and Offenbach.

'I like a good waltz all the same,' said Mainwairing.

'Yes, yes, of course; so do I in its proper place, you know—in its proper place. I used to be very fond of dancing as a bachelor; and, though perhaps I ought not to say so, I can tell you I was about as good a dancer as you would have met anywhere in those days. I recollect once, at Vienna, poor old Strauss telling me that I was the only foreigner he had ever seen

who really understood the waltz. Who was that lady you bowed to? Very fine-looking woman! Is that her daughter? English, of course. I haven't called on half the people here. I am afraid they must think me very uncivil. But, living out of the town, one gets lazy about paying visits. And, between you and me,' adds Mr. Howard, confidentially, 'I don't much care, now that my girl is old enough to go into society, about making the acquaintance of people I know nothing of. Such a lot of queer specimens travel nowadays that one can't be too particular about whom one knows. Don't you agree with me?'

'I am sure you are quite right. But Miss Howard must be tired of walking; don't you think we might as well sit down?' said Mainwairing, who perhaps did not much relish being paraded in the full glare of the gas-lamps by this loud-voiced personage.

The trio accordingly seated themselves at one of the little round tables which were dotted all over the garden; and a white-aproned waiter coming up presently, Mr. Howard was graciously pleased to order an ice for his daughter and a carafe of cognac and a siphon for himself and his friend. Mr. Howard had all the talking to himself. Mainwairing subsided into silence and contemplation of the musicians; and as for Linda, she was fully occupied in studying the features and costumes of the throng around her.

Linda's knowledge of the manners and habits of polite society had been acquired principally at theatres, concert-rooms, and other places of public entertainment. Her naturally quick powers of observation and retentive memory had been strengthened by her solitary mode of life, and upon the rare occasions when her father took her with him to any such assemblages she was accustomed to watch closely the dress and bearing of the ladies—particularly of the English ladies, who interested her most—to take mental notes thereof, and thus glean a few hints for her own future use. During the winter she had made good use of her eyes on the skating-pond in the Grosse Garten, whither the fashionable world of Dresden was wont to



repair daily; and in a very short time she had become familiar with the features of nearly all the members of the English colony, though she had not discovered the names of more than half-a-dozen of them. The girl, looking on, a little wistfully, at the laughing, chattering, and flirtation from which she was excluded, used to amuse herself by conferring imaginary names and histories upon these people, and watching them work out their several destinies, day by day. She now recognised a few of these sitting near her, and, among others, two ladies, evidently mother and daughter, whose handsome faces and fashionable attire had frequently attracted her attention in the course of the winter. had just noted the fact that the elder lady was still wearing her winter bonnet, whereas the younger had arrayed herself in a new and beautifully-fitting costume more suited to the season, when they rose from the table at which they had been seated, and making their way towards the exit, passed so close to Mr. Mainwairing's chair that he had to rise to make room for The elder lady returned his bow with a

smile and a 'Good-night,' and was moving on; but the daughter, a tall, erect blonde, who looked very self-possessed, very handsome, and on the best terms with herself and the world at large, paused before Mainwairing's chair, and looked him full in the face.

- 'Well, Mr. Mainwairing!' said she. 'I hope you feel ashamed of yourself.'
- 'Not more than usual, I think, Miss Tower,' replied the person addressed. 'Is there any reason why I should?'
- 'Well, considering that you promised to bring us here this evening, that we waited more than half-an-hour for you, and that we had to come at last without an escort, I really think there is,' answered the young lady.

Mainwairing dropped his hat, and made a gesture as though he would tear his close-cropped hair.

'I am covered with confusion,' he said. 'I don't know what to say. It is the fault of my atrocious memory, which has kept me in hot water ever since I left the nursery. Please consider me humbled in the dust before you.'

- 'Oh, don't apologise,' said the young lady. And then, without troubling herself to lower her voice, she added, with a significant glance at Linda, 'You have an excellent excuse, I see.'
- 'Could you possibly be induced to forgive me if I promised never to offend again?' asked Mainwairing, choosing to ignore this last remark.
- 'I suppose I must,' answered Miss Tower. 'There are so very few civilised people in this dreary place that it would hardly do to quarrel with one of them, would it? Besides, I haven't really missed you. I have been talking to one of the French attachés, who has been ten times more amusing than you ever are in your liveliest moments. Come—to show you that I bear no malice—you shall have the honour of accompanying me to a picnic at Moritzburg to-morrow. It will be horribly slow, of course; but we shall have a good long ride out there and back again, which will be just a shade better than doing nothing.'
- 'I shall be delighted,' said Mainwairing.
 'What time do you start?'
 - 'Twelve o'clock sharp. We will meet in

front of the hotel. By-the-by, I forgot to thank you for sending me that music. I have practised it diligently; and if you will come in to-morrow evening——'

The rest of the speech was inaudible to Linda; for Mrs Tower, who had shown several signs of impatience during the above colloquy, now imperatively beckoned her daughter to follow her, and she and Mainwairing walked slowly away, talking as they went.

The latter returned, in a minute or two, to find Linda looking decidedly cross. He thought she had been annoyed by his leaving her so abruptly, and hastened to offer an explanation.

'The Towers are very old friends of mine,' he said. 'It was really too bad of me to forget my engagement to them. They come from our part of the country, and I have known them all my life.'

'Oh, indeed!' said Linda, coldly; and not another word of comment could Mainwairing's account of Mrs. Tower and her daughter, and the reasons which had induced them to spend a winter in Dresden, elicit from her. But, after a time, Mr. Howard having sauntered away to examine the programme, Linda turned suddenly round and exclaimed—

- 'Do you understand now why I wish to be rich?'
- 'What do you mean?' asked Mainwairing, a little surprised at this irrelevant query.
- 'Do you think it is pleasant to be treated as your friends treated me just now?' cried Linda, with some warmth. 'Do you think I am resigned to being despised because papa—poor dear!—has to wear an old coat, and because my dress is old-fashioned and has been turned?
- 'You are thinking of what Miss Tower said,' answered Mainwairing. 'It was very impertinent of her; but she is only silly—not intentionally rude. She is a very good-natured girl.'
- 'Is she? If we had been rich people, though, I don't think she would have shown her good nature exactly in that way. And I don't think her mamma would have stared at me as she did, with the corners of her mouth drawn down and her eyebrows almost disappearing under her hair.' Here Linda gave a

very fair imitation of Mrs. Tower's supercilious expression. 'All the time you were talking,' she continued, 'every line in her face and every hair on her head was bristling with notes of interrogation. I could hear her saying, "Pray, who is this person?" as distinctly as if she had spoken the words. Confess the truth, now—she did say so, as soon as you were out of earshot, didn't she?'

At this Mainwairing stammered, and became somewhat red about the ears; for some such enquiry had indeed been addressed to him by Mrs. Tower, and his answer had drawn from that lady a pleasant remark to the effect that the girl was really remarkably pretty in her way, and that she had been told—though, of course, she could not vouch for the truth of the report—that the father was a returned convict.

Linda laughed. 'I suspect your friend had nothing very complimentary to say about me,' she said. 'Yet it is impossible that she can know anything whatever of us, except that we are badly off.'

'I think you are rather too sensitive,' said

Mainwairing. 'English people are always apt to put on a rather stand-off manner towards anybody they do not happen to have been introduced to. It proceeds from shyness as much as anything else.'

'Yes: I should think Mrs. Tower suffered a good deal from shyness,' said Linda, drily. Then, after a short pause, she resumed: 'I think English people, when they are ladies and gentlemen, are superior in every way to all other nations: but I think there are fewer ladies and gentlemen in England than anywhere It always makes me laugh when I read else. in the newspapers that old fiction about Englishmen having a partiality for taking the weaker side; because, as far as my experience goes, that is exactly what Englishmen never do. So long as you are rich or have a title they can't be too civil to you; but if you are poor and friendless and unknown they are not contented with ignoring you—they must needs insult you into the bargain.'

'I hope you don't include me in the general condemnation,' said Mainwairing.

'No,' answered Linda, 'I don't think you are like the rest. I watched you, just now, to see whether you would look ashamed of us when your friends spoke to you, and I saw that you did not. I always liked you, you know, from the first, and now I look upon you as a real friend. I always feel that I can talk to you without thinking before I speak—just as I should to papa.'

If Mainwairing had been at all disposed to fall in love with Linda he might not have found this frank avowal altogether agreeable; but he was not in the least so disposed. He had prudently examined himself with reference to this point at the time when his visits to Blasewitz were becoming more frequent, and had convinced himself that he was not in danger of gliding into any foolish attachment. In the first place, he had no intention of falling in love with anyone. Music was his mistress, and to music he purposed, at any rate for some time to come, to remain faithful. Secondly, his income was not sufficiently large to permit of his marrying a dowerless maiden. And, lastly, he

could not, under any circumstances, have brought himself to accept Mr. Howard as a father-in-law. Fancy that awful man slapping one on the back and addressing one by one's Christian name! The bare thought of such a thing made Mainwairing shiver from head to foot. Being thus entirely free from any wish to become more than a friend to Miss Howard, Mainwairing ought to have taken her candid assurance as a great compliment, and that he did not so regard it is only an additional unneeded proof of the perversity of human nature.

'You talk as if I were seventy,' he said, in a rather aggrieved tone.

Linda contemplated him consideringly for a few seconds from under her long eyelashes.

'You never seem quite like a young man, somehow,' said she. 'I can't bear young men,' she added hastily, thinking she had been rude.

'It seems that there are a good many classes of society that you can't bear,' observed Mainwairing, rather amused. 'What have young men in general been doing to arouse your animosity?'

- 'Oh, nothing special: only I never get on so well with them as with older people. Young men are generally either sensitive or conceited, so that one must always be careful of hurting their feelings. And then one soon gets tired of talking nonsense and listening to laboured compliments.'
 - 'I suppose one does.'
- 'Now, you,' continued Linda, 'are not in the least that sort of person. How long is it that we have known you now? Nearly three months, is it not? And I don't think I have once heard you make a pretty speech. Indeed, you very often sit for half-an-hour without saying a word.'
- 'I am afraid I am a very dull companion sometimes,' said Mainwairing, compunctiously. 'But it is such a comfort not to be perpetually obliged to make conversation when you have really nothing to say. I believe the principal reason why there are so few friendships between men and women is, that most ladies can't be happy unless they are talking.'
 - 'You remind me of a queer old lady who

was very kind to me, a few years ago, at Florence,' said Linda. 'She used to say, "My dear, study the art of silence. Any fool can learn to chatter; but a woman who has got ideas in her head, and yet manages to hold her tongue occasionally, may go far." She was an incessant talker herself, nevertheless.'

- 'Most people who admire the beauty of silence are,' remarked Mainwairing.
- 'She was a very odd old woman,' resumed Linda. 'Do you know she had a most intense dislike to papa?'
 - 'You don't say so!'
- 'Yes; she used to be so rude to him that at last he was obliged to give up going to see her; and, though he did not mind that, it annoyed me. So that the acquaintance gradually dropped. Papa used to think she would leave me something when she died; but she didn't, unfortunately. I read her will in the *Illustrated*, and I think the greater part of her money went to a home for destitute dogs, or something of that kind.'

At this juncture Mr. Howard reappeared,

bringing with him a tall, broad-shouldered young man, clad in the blue tunic and silver lace of the Body Guard, who bent low over the hand which Linda extended to him, and who was introduced by her to Mr. Mainwairing as Freiherr von Oberndorf. Mainwairing lifted his hat, and the young officer bowed, more Germanico, bringing his heels together with a click, bending forward from the waist, and recovering himself with a jerk, as if a string somewhere about his person had been pulled and then suddenly let go.

- 'You are not long in Tresten—no?' he said.
 - 'Several months,' said Mainwairing.
- 'Inteet? It is sdrainch that we are not met before.'
- 'Not very,' said Mainwairing, smiling. 'I don't go into society here at all. In fact, I came to Dresden principally to take lessons in music, and I find I have very little time for anything else.'
- 'You have heard me speak of Mr. Mainwairing's wonderful violin-playing, von Obern-

dorf. He talks about taking lessons; but, upon my word, I don't think he can have very much to learn,' put in Mr. Howard, meaning to be agreeable.

'Ah, so-o-o!' said the German. 'Yes; I have heard—it is a friend von me, Herr von Podewitz, who has told me of your talent, sir.'

And Mainwairing wondered what evil report of him Herr von Podewitz could have given to induce his new acquaintance to desist from the conversation so abruptly; and, turning away, to plant himself astride upon a chair beside Mr. Howard, whence, with his arms resting upon the back, he sat silently gazing at the Englishman with a countenance full of trouble and displeasure.

The matter, however, did not greatly interest Mr. Mainwairing.

- 'Is that one of the young men whom you cannot bear?' he asked, in a low voice, bending forward towards Linda.
- 'Well, no,' she replied. 'He is one of the exceptions that prove the rule. I don't think

anybody could dislike Herr von Oberndorf. You will like him, I think, though he is not exactly your style. He is not clever, you know; but such a simple, honest, kind-hearted fellow!'

'Brave comme son épée, et bête comme son cheval,' muttered Mainwairing. 'I have no doubt one would get very fond of him if one knew him better; but I don't think there is anything specially attractive about him to a stranger. Why doesn't somebody tell him not to speak English?'

'I daresay he speaks it better than you do German,' retorted Linda, slightly nettled by this disparaging tone. Which was so undeniably true that Mainwairing judged it best not to pursue the subject further.

A short interval of silence followed, during which Mr. Howard was heard conversing in affable and fluent German to the young officer, who, for his part, was too busily engaged in watching Linda from beneath his straight brows to give much attention to the remarks addressed to him. There was no misunder-

standing those pathetic glances. Mainwairing, reading their meaning rightly, began to perceive the cause of Herr von Oberndorf's coldness towards him. 'I believe the foolish boy is doing me the honour to be jealous of me,' thought he, amused, but not altogether displeased at the discovery. Now, since Mainwairing was not himself in love with Linda, it should have cost him no great self-sacrifice to relinquish his position at her side in favour of the new arrival and take his turn of Mr. Howard's entertaining company. But I am sorry to say that no idea of performing this little act of renunciation crossed his mind for a moment. On the contrary, being, from various causes, in a somewhat dissatisfied mood, that evening, with himself and with things generally, he was in no way disposed towards disinterested benevolence, and derived an unkind satisfaction from Herr von Oberndorf's visible discomfiture, which he thought it would be very good fun to augment. With this unworthy end in view he proceeded to initiate what bore all the outward semblance of a strong flirtation with Miss Howard. Main-

wairing, though in general a taciturn man, was capable of making himself very agreeable when he chose. He had greater conversational powers than most Englishmen, had travelled a great deal; and, having been always provided with good introductions, had seen something of nearly all the celebrated men and women of the day. It was, therefore, no very difficult task for him to enthrall the attention of an inexperienced girl like Linda Howard, who was at the age when the sound of great names excites more awe and veneration than it is apt to evoke in later years. She drank in eagerly Mainwairing's descriptions of the Emperor of the French, of Herr von Bismark—at that time a most unpopular and distrusted personage in Germany-of Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi, and Cavour. Mainwairing had made his bow to all these eminent persons; and some of them had even accorded to him the honour of a private interview. This was very interesting and delightful; and Linda had a hundred questions to put as to the private bearing of the rulers of France, Prussia, and Italy, and their famous

ministers. Did Garibaldi always wear a red shirt? Was it a fact that Napoleon III. smoked twenty cigars a day? And was the great Bismark as phenomenal a beer-drinker as he was represented?—and so forth, and so forth. To these and other queries of a similar nature Mainwairing replied to the best of his ability; but it was when he went on to talk of the musical world in Paris, and of the celebrated maestri who had taken up their abode there, that his hearer's interest became most excited. To her a man who had actually conversed with Rossini and Auber and Meyerbeer was no ordinary individual; and her respect for Mainwairing was more increased by her discovery of his acquaintance with these great composers than by his anecdotes of political notorieties. For, after all, any man of good birth and sufficient means can make his way into kings' palaces, whereas one must have some higher claims to distinction than these to be admitted into the companionship of a genius—or so, at least, Linda thought. And by degrees Mainwairing, warming with his subject, proceeded,

from the composers, to speak of their works, and thence by a natural transition, of the supremacy of the violin over all other instruments. Having reached that point, he was soon fairly seated upon his hobby and cantering gently through pleasant places—cavatinas, rondos, and symphonies—forgetful of time and place, and unconscious of the angry blue eyes which were peering at him from the other side of the table through a veil of tobacco-smoke.

Meanwhile the concert came to an end. The band concluded its programme with a crashing march; the gas-lamps were turned down, one by one, and there was a general scraping of chairs and shuffling of footsteps as the company rose to disperse. Mainwairing, following the stream, found himself presently in the clutches of Mr. Howard again, while before him was the broad blue back of Freiherr von Oberndorf, who had adroitly seized his opportunity and offered his arm to Linda. This order of going was preserved as far as the Schloss Platz, where Mr. Howard hailed a passing droschke.

'Well, Mainwairing,' said he, holding out

his hand, 'we will bid you good-night here. See you again soon, eh? Von Oberndorf, can we give you a lift? We are going your way.'

Mainwairing approached the dilapidated conveyance in which Linda had already taken her place.

- 'Good night, Miss Howard,' he said. 'I shall turn up for my practice to-morrow, if you will allow me.'
- 'Not to-morrow,' said Linda. 'You are going to Moritzburg, you know.'
- 'Ah, yes, to be sure! Thanks for reminding me. Good night.'

Herr von Oberndorf stiffened himself all over, raised one hand, with the palm outwards, to the side of his forage-cap, and kept it there while he solemnly bent what appeared to be the only joint in his body, in acknowledgment of the Englishman's somewhat curt 'Good evening;' and then dived, head first, into the recesses of the droschke, where he must have found it a little difficult to dispose of his long legs and his still longer sword.

Mainwairing remained on the silent, moonlit

square till the rattle of the departing vehicle had died away in the distance. Then he turned and took his way meditatively back towards his hotel. But, on arriving at the door, he changed his mind, and thought he would look in at the English Club before going to bed. There he found a few of the young men and Paterfamiliases who, for educational or economical reasons, were temporarily domiciled in the Saxon capital, trying to get up a pool; and, upon their invitation, adjourned with them to the billiard-room.

- 'I say, Mainwairing,' said one of the young men, after play had been going on for some few minutes, 'do you know much of that fellow, Howard, you were with at the band this evening?'
- 'Not much,' answered Mainwairing. 'About as much as I know of you—or anybody here. Why do you ask?'
- 'Oh, nothing. I thought perhaps he was a friend of yours.'
 - 'Not at all,' said Mainwairing.
- 'Well, I'll tell you what,' said the young man, winking, with the solemn knowingness of

youth; 'I wouldn't play écarté with him, if I was you. I know something of the game, but he's one too many for me, I can tell you.'

'Mr. Howard,' said Mainwairing, after making his stroke with much deliberation, 'has probably been studying the game of écarté for the last forty years, more or less; you, I should say, have been at it for about four. Why on earth you should suppose that you are likely to beat him I can't see.'

'Oh, I don't want to swagger about my play,' returned the young man, rather annoyed.
'I'm not exactly a beginner, as it happens; but of course I can't win money out of a man who turns up the king every other deal.'

'Now, look here, my boy,' said Mainwairing, laying his hand upon the speaker's arm; 'take my advice, and don't go about saying that sort of thing, or you will find yourself in trouble one of these days. You either mean nothing or you mean that Mr. Howard cheats at cards. And, as one who has perhaps seen rather more of club life than you have, let me tell you that it don't do to make speeches of that kind, in a

club or anywhere else, unless you have clear and positive proof to bring forward—and not always then.'

- 'I didn't say he cheated,' blurted out the young man, growing very red and confused.
- 'I certainly understood you to hint it,' said Mainwairing.
- 'Oh, hang the man!' struck in another player. 'Who the deuce cares whether he's a swindler or not? He's an awful snob, anyhow, and I don't know why they let him in here at all. Green upon brown—player in hand. On you go, green!'

Nothing more was said as to Mr. Howard or his character; but there was a general and evident feeling of restraint till the end of the game; and Mainwairing, as he walked homewards in the moonlight, could not help wondering what the members of the club were saying of him, now that his back was turned. He was angry with himself, and wished he had had the sense to hold his tongue. Why should he have taken up the cudgels for this adventurer—a man whom he personally disliked ex-

cessively, and had the worst possible opinion of? What business was it of his if people chose to say unpleasant things of the fellow?

Not being able to answer these questions to his satisfaction, Mr. Mainwairing went to bed in a very bad humour.

CHAPTER III.

IN MR. HOWARD'S GARDEN.

THE following day dawned bright and fresh—a genuine spring morning, such as one imagineserroneously perhaps—to have been more common in former times than now. Dresden. basking in the sunshine, was full of life and The vista of double windows along the streets, not yet removed after the long winter, was blazing and glittering so that the eyes of the passers-by ached when they looked upwards; the shops in the Schloss Strasse had lowered their awnings; in the Altmarkt, where old women, under huge umbrellas, were selling fruit and vegetables and flowers, groups of homely housewives, making their morning purchases, collected together to gossip and enjoy the warmth; the flagstones under foot were positively too hot to be pleasant; the dogs lay panting in the shade; and there was nothing, except the whiteness of the lights and the pale blue shadows, to show that it was not yet summer.

But out at Blasewitz, where a cool breeze was sweeping fitfully down from the hills, and fleecy clouds, sailing high overhead, made dark moving patches upon the bright green of the fields, the season manifested itself more plainly. There every bank and hedgerow was gay with wild-flowers; the buds on the trees were breaking, almost visibly, into verdure; the birds were in full song; and, in Mr. Howard's garden, the hyacinths and crocuses and violets, still sparkling with the dews of the night, were drinking in a feast of sunshine.

On a morning like this it was impossible for a young and healthy girl to remain indoors even though household duties might render it advisable for her to do so; still less could such a one contemplate with equanimity the practising of scales and exercises, which is but a doleful occupation at the best of times. Feeling this, Linda gathered up into a basket a mass of brown holland, which was destined, at some future time, to be converted into as fashionable a summer dress as the cheapness of the material and the ingenuity of the maker would admit of, and, collecting needles, thread, scissors, and other necessary implements, betook herself to a certain seat upon the lawn, where, with her head in the shade and her feet in the sun, she was able to combine inevitable labour with a consoling enjoyment of the good gifts of Nature.

I am given to understand by those who should know that, among all the troublesome tasks which must needs fall to the lot of impecunious ladies, there is none more distressing than that of making one's own gowns. There is, it appears, in this kind of work a laborious monotony, together with a grievous conviction of ultimate failure—more or less absolute—very trying alike to the temper and the spirits; and I have heard it asserted that many a weary maiden has thankfully accepted the first eligible offer made to her merely in order to escape

from this painful drudgery. There are, however, exceptions to every rule; and Linda, though, as we have seen, she had a thorough appreciation of the evils of poverty, desired riches rather for their indirect than for their immediate consequences, and was too clever and experienced in the use of her needle to count dressmaking as a hardship.

Moreover, she was, partly by temperament, but partly also by will, accustomed to make the best of things, and to accept small troubles without crying out. Therefore she stitched away contentedly enough, though her father had quarrelled with his breakfast, and had made himself excessively unpleasant before setting out for Dresden; though there was a little difficulty about the washing bill; and though she had every prospect of passing the whole of this delicious spring day in complete solitude.

Nevertheless, as the hours wore on she began to be sensible of a strong desire to have somebody with whom to exchange ideas. Mainwairing's daily visit had become so much a matter of course in her uneventful life that she missed him to-day much more than she had expected to do.

'He does not say much,' thought Linda, 'and I don't think he always listens when I speak; but at least he is better than nobody, and I have got accustomed to seeing him. He was really very amusing last night too. Oh, dear! I suppose he is half-way to Moritzburg by this time, cantering along beside that detestable Miss Tower.'

Linda sighed, and pulled out from her waistband a small silver watch, presented to her, in an unwonted excess of generosity, by her father some years before.

'Nearly half-past one,' she remarked, getting up and putting her work back into its basket.

Luncheon was a feast unknown to the Howard ménage. The master of the house was seldom at home in the middle of the day; and Linda, if she happened to feel hungry between breakfast and dinner-time, took the simplest and least expensive means of satisfying her wants. She now entered the house, and presently emerged thence, carrying in her hand a slice of

dry bread—Mr. Howard was the only member of the household permitted to indulge in the headlong extravagance of butter—which she proceeded to dispose of, in a leisurely and contented manner, while she gazed at the sunny landscape before her.

An immense, clumsy raft, with timber from the Bohemian mountains, was floating down the stream, guided by a few rough-looking fellows, who, having felled the wood in their own country, were drifting down in this easy fashion towards the sea, to dispose of it, raft and all. Linda, watching the occupants of the unwieldy craft, was thinking to herself that such a mode of travelling must be very amusing, and that, upon the whole, it must be pleasanter to belong to the lower classes than to the tag-end of the upper-middle, when a sound which had of late become familiar to her, the distant noise of oars turning in the rowlocks, caught her ear, and startled her with a sudden thrill of expectation. Could it be possible that Mr. Mainwairing had not gone to Moritzburg after all? Almost before she had had time to put this question to herself the sharp bow of a boat shot out from behind the evergreens at the end of the lawn, and there, sure enough, was Mr. Mainwairing in his shirt-sleeves, making for his accustomed landing-place. Linda ran down to meet him. He was busy making fast his boat to the stump of a tree, but he looked up and took off his hat as the girl approached him, her face beaming with a bright welcome.

'I am so glad to see you!' she exclaimed.

Mainwairing stepped out of the boat, and held out his hand, striving ineffectually not to look too much gratified at this announcement.

'Are you really?' he said. 'I was just thinking I ought to apologise for taking you by surprise in this way.'

'Pray don't do anything of the kind. I don't know when I have been so pleased to see anybody. I was simply dying of loneliness when you appeared. Generally I can bear a good deal of my own company; but there are some days—don't you know?—when one feels that one must have somebody or something to talk to—even if it were only a dog or a cat.'

- 'You are very flattering,' said Mainwairing, gravely.
- 'Oh, I did not mean to say that I don't prefer you a thousand times to a dumb animal. In fact, I had rather talk to you than to anybody else in Dresden. Papa has gone out, and I suppose I shan't see him again till dinner-time.'
- 'For this and all His mercies!——'muttered Mainwairing inaudibly, stooping to pick a flower.
- 'So I hope you mean to stay a good long time. By-the-bye, why are you not at Moritz-burg? You didn't forget again, did you?'
- 'No,' replied Mainwairing, 'I did not forget; but unfortunately I woke with such a bad headache that I really could not have ridden out there in the hot sun.'

Linda looked surprised. 'You are better now, I suppose?' she said; 'because I should think rowing must be at least as bad for a headache as riding.'

- 'I thought a row to Blasewitz would do me good—and it has,' said Mainwairing, smiling.
- 'Do you mean to say,' said Linda, with a quick side-glance at him, 'that you did not want to go to Moritzburg?'

- 'I most certainly did not. But you need not look as if you thought I had told a dreadful fib: I really had a headache. At the same time, mind you, I think one is justified in saying anything to escape the infliction of a picnic.'
- 'Well, I don't know about that,' said Linda, doubtfully; 'but, at all events, I am delighted that you have come. You don't want to practise at once, do you? It is so nice sitting out here.'

I don't want to practise at all,' said Mainwairing, stretching himself full length on the ground beside his hostess. 'I want nothing, except to hear you talk, and feel the sun, and see the flowers, and listen to the birds, and thank Heaven that I haven't got to entertain Ada Tower.'

- 'But I thought you liked Miss Tower so much,' said Linda, looking up from the work which she had resumed.
- 'Did I say so? Oh, yes, I like her very well: I have known her all my life, as I told you. But I don't feel quite up to being bored with her to-day.'
 - 'Do you know,' said Linda, beginning to

stitch again, 'I have an idea that some day or other you will marry Miss Tower?'

Mainwairing had clasped his hands behind his head, and was staring up at the sky. He showed no signs of surprise or discomfiture at this abrupt prediction; but said, without altering his attitude—

- 'No one can tell what the future may have in store for him; but I have more than one excellent reason for thinking that you are mistaken. Without taking into consideration my own personal wishes, I can assure you that Mrs. Tower is far too ambitious to dream of marrying her daughter to a pauper like me. I fancy I see her face if anyone proposed such an alliance to her!'
 - 'And Miss Tower—what would she say?'
- 'Really, I don't know,' answered Mainwairing. 'I have had no opportunity of getting at Miss Tower's sentiments with regard to me in the light of a possible husband, and I never shall have, for I have not the faintest intention of questioning her upon the subject.'
 - 'I am glad of that,' said Linda, thought-

fully, 'because she did not seem to me to be exactly the sort of person who would suit you.'

- 'Very few people do suit me,' said Mainwairing; 'I am a cantankerous sort of brute, taking me altogether. But Ada is not so objectionable as you imagine. She is one of the most popular girls I know.'
- 'I daresay,' said Linda; 'but is she quite—quite——'
- 'Quite a lady? Well, yes, I think she is. You see, ladies in the present day are very different from what they used to be twenty or thirty years ago. It is the custom nowadays to be unceremonious and familiar, to talk loud, and to know everything and say everything. It is not a fascinating custom, I admit, and the novelty of it has worn off long ago. Still the best people follow it; and one can't blame a girl, who naturally wishes to be considered fashionable, for doing as others do.'
- 'I don't know anything about fashionable people,' said Linda; 'but I don't think a lady ought to be ill-bred. Miss Tower treated me last night as if I were her servant—much more

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rudely, indeed, than I would ever have treated any servant. And yet my family is at least as good as hers, though I am poor,' added Linda, drawing herself up proudly. For had not her mother been Lady Helen Blount? And did not her father bear the name and arms of Howard? The truth is, that that modest gentleman wore, upon his little finger, a signetring engraved with a lion statant, guardant, and was in the habit of referring blandly to certain eminent persons as belonging to 'the Catholic branch of the family.' Poor Linda had heard very little about her paternal grandfather, and was quite unaware that the valuable plate left by him to his son, Mr. Thomas Howard, of Lombard Street, E.C., and Lancaster Gate, W., bore the device of a sheep proper, encircled by the motto Sic vos non vobis.

Mainwairing attempted no further defence of Miss Tower, nor did Linda care to pursue the subject.

- 'Do you dislike picnics very much, Mr. Mainwairing?' she asked, after a pause.
 - 'Dislike is not the word,' replied he; 'I

positively loathe them. I never met a man who didn't—unless, of course, he was in love. In that case picnics may be tolerated as a means towards an end; but that any human creature, in a healthy state of mind, can enjoy squatting cross-legged on the ground, with his plate on his knees, and drinking out of somebody else's glass, is simply inconceivable.'

- 'How unfortunate!' said Linda. 'We are thinking of making a small party to spend the day at Schandau to-morrow, and papa meant, if he had met you to-day, to have asked you to join us; but, of course, now we must not venture to inflict such a trial upon you.'
- 'That,' said Mainwairing, 'is quite a different thing. It is large picnics that I object to—not small ones. Besides, I really feel that I ought to see the Saxon Switzerland.'
 - 'You will come, then?'
- 'With all the pleasure in life. Who is going besides yourselves?'
- a Countess von Zerlitz—and her daughter; and perhaps Herr von Oberndorf, if he is not on duty.'

'H'm! What sort of a person is Fräulein von Zerlitz? Dumpy and blonde and dowdy, of course; has a great flow of artless conversation, in all probability; being a German, is safe to be musical; so that we shall have that in common. I daresay I shall get on very comfortably with her.'

Linda was forced to confess that this slight imaginary sketch was not wholly devoid of resemblance.

- 'But why are you so anxious about Fräulein von Zerlitz?' she asked.
- 'Because it is forcibly borne in upon me that she and I will have to employ the greater part of to-morrow in cultivating one another's acquaintance. Your father will naturally pair off with the old lady; and you, I presume, will be monopolised by your friend the Freiherr.'
- 'Indeed, you are quite mistaken,' said Linda. 'I should not think of remaining with the same person all day; papa would not like it. Besides, if I had to choose my companion I should certainly prefer you very much to Herr you Oberndorf.'

- 'Would you?' said Mainwairing, almost eagerly.
- 'Undoubtedly,' replied Linda. And she was about to state her reasons for this gratifying preference—reasons which, perhaps, might not have been found altogether palatable by its object—when a peremptory, rather high-pitched voice was heard calling 'Linda! Linda!' and presently Mr. Howard emerged from behind a clump of bushes, his eyes fixed upon a strip of blue paper which he held in his hand, and which appeared to be arousing in him feelings of no slight displeasure.
- 'What is the meaning of this, may I ask?' said he, tapping the offending sheet with an indignant forefinger. 'Here's a grocer's bill sent into me, amounting to upwards of nine thalers, for biscuits and preserved fruits, and God knows what else! I thought it was clearly understood between us that the money which I allow you for housekeeping was to cover all expenses of this kind.'

Linda had stood up to receive her punishment bravely, thereby unintentionally conceal-

ing the recumbent form of Mr. Mainwairing, whose existence, indeed, she had entirely forgotten in this terrible and sudden moment of detection.

'We have had people often to dinner lately,' said she, humbly. 'I was obliged to get dessert for them. I am very sorry that horrid man has sent in his bill to you, papa; I never thought he would do that. And I am sure I shall be able to pay him off by degrees.'

'That,' said Mr. Howard, with calm indifference, 'is entirely your affair. But you will please understand, once for all, that I will not be annoyed by housekeeping bills, that I will not pay such bills, and that, if anything of this kind occurs again, I shall stop the amount out of your next—— Hullo, Mainwairing! (with a swift dissolution of sternness into amiability) didn't see you before. Glad I got home in time to catch you. We are going to make a short expedition into the Saxon Switzerland tomorrow—quite a small affair—and I hoped you might be prevailed upon to make one of the party.'

'So Miss Howard has been telling me,' answered Mainwairing, staring straight before him, as his custom was when addressing Mr. Howard, for he harboured so strong a prejudice against that gentleman that he never looked at him when he could avoid it. 'I shall be very glad to accept your kind invitation.'

'That's all right. Linda, my dear, would you mind going and getting me a pocket-hand-kerchief out of my room?'

And, as soon as his daughter had dutifully departed on this errand, Mr. Howard took occasion to remark upon the dangerous and often fatal habit into which, as he said, young people were only too prone to fall, of obtaining goods upon credit.

'I daresay you thought me harsh just now,' observed this careful parent, 'but it is a subject upon which I feel very strongly; and Linda, poor child, is sometimes apt to be careless. I had far rather put her to a little temporary pain than let her get into the way of running up unnecessary bills; for I know well,' said Mr. Howard, wagging his head mournfully;

- 'how rapidly such a tendency increases if it is once given way to.'
- 'I should rather imagine you did!' thought Mainwairing, but he said nothing, and continued to contemplate space.
- 'Yes,' went on Mr. Howard, finding his pause productive of no reply; 'a father, if he wishes to do his duty by his children, must sometimes show himself severe. It is easier, of course, to be always pleasant; but what I say is, a spoilt child has had unkind parents. Don't you agree with me?'

Still no answer.

'I must say, however,' proceeded Mr. Howard, 'that I very seldom have to scold Linda. She is not perfect, I admit; who is? But, making allowances for a few small failings, she really is as good a little girl as ever breathed, though I say it. I shall lose my right hand when I part with her—as I suppose I shall have to do, some fine day.'

Mr. Howard sighed quite pathetically at the anticipation of so sorrowful an eventuality.

Maiinwairing, who had not moved from his

recumbent position on the grass, thrust his hands into the pockets of his flannel trousers, turned his head away towards the river, and began to whistle *La ci darem*, softly.

'Deuce take the fellow! What's the matter with him?' thought Mr. Howard, snapping off a spray of laburnum and pulling the yellow flowers from their stem a little nervously. 'Is he going to sleep?'

Apparently not; for on Linda returning, at this moment, with the requested handkerchief Mr. Mainwairing sprang hastily to his feet and bade his friends good-bye.

- 'I shall be late for the table d'hôte as it is,' said he. 'Au revoir, Miss Howard. I will be up in good time to-morrow morning.' And so strode away to his boat.
- 'Good fellow, Mainwairing,' observed Mr. Howard, watching the young man's retreating figure, 'but not brilliant. I never can get a word out of him.'
- 'He is not a great talker,' acquiesced Linda; 'but I think he is a very pleasant companion.'

'Not to me,' said Mr. Howard, turning away with a yawn; 'but that only shows that old men and young ladies belong to different species.'

CHAPTER IV.

HERR VON OBERNDORF UNSHEATHES HIS SWORD.

The picturesque district through which the Elbe flows on its way from the rugged mountains of its birth towards the plains of Saxony and Prussia, and which has received the exceedingly inappropriate name of the Saxon Switzerland, is well known to English tourists, of whom small armies annually invade its quiet valleys and leafy ravines, scale its modest mountains, and carve their honoured names upon the soft sandstone of its rocks. The scenery of this country, which is of a very peculiar order, would be sublime if it could be looked at through a magnifying glass. Precipices, crowned by waving woods, tower smooth and sheer above the winding Elbe; fantastic peaks and

pinnacles and masses of rock, bare of any vegetation, save lichens and, here and there, a solitary fir-tree clinging to a cranny, rise in abrupt isolation above miniature bright-green meadows, and hem in gorges so narrow that, as you peer down into them, they seem scarcely wide enough to accommodate even the tiny streamlets which hurry through them to join the river. But the element of size is everywhere wanting; and it is probably only the common possession of an abundance of rocks and pines that has led to the discovery of a similarity between this region and Switzerland, which country it resembles in much the same sense as Amsterdam may be said to resemble Venice.

Few people, however, desire perpetual grandeur of scenery; and a man must be hard to please who would quarrel with the many charming landscapes that open out before him as he makes his way from Pillnitz to Bodenbach. There is pleasant enough occupation for a week or ten days of an idle tourist's time in exploring the by-ways of the Sächsische Schweiz, as well as in making the excursions prescribed by the

inexorable law of Murray—the Bastei, with its far-stretching prospect of woodland, river, and plain; the lofty (comparatively lofty) Winterberg; the fortress of Königstein, once considered impregnable, but no longer so, I presume, in these days of Krupp cannons—and divers other points of interest, duly done justice to in the red book. It is a country, too, which has many associations, legendary and historic, if the tourist care about such things—which, in all probability, he will not.

What is more likely to interest him is the fact that hotel accommodation, unpretending but cleanly, and fairly good living may be obtained in the trim little villages that nestle under the cliffs on either side of the brown Elbe. Among these Schandau, which boasts of mineral springs, and is frequented, during the summer season, by Herrschaft of the most highly-born description, enjoys a special preeminence; and it was rather the good character he had heard of the hotel of that little town than its proximity to some of the most celebrated spots in Saxon Switzerland that had

influenced Mr. Howard in choosing it as the object of an excursion.

Mainwairing, in obedience to the instructions he had received, left his bed at an abnormally early hour on the appointed morning, dressed himself as quickly as he was able, and arrived at the station just in time to catch the train in which the rest of the party had already taken their places. It is always a mistake to run a train too close; but it is more particularly so when the traveller desires to have the choice of any particular seat, or to place himself next to any special person. In the present instance, Mainwairing, on being hastily thrust by a flustered guard into the compartment secured by Mr. Howard and his friends. found the seat next the further window occupied by Linda, while that opposite to her had been taken possession of by Herr von Oberndorf. The two places in the centre of the carriage were filled by Mr. Howard and Fräulein von Zerlitz, a plump, fair-haired maiden of the true Teutonic type; and there was obviously no resource for the latest arrival but to ensconce

himself in the corner facing that in which the Frau Gräfin von Zerlitz had disposed her ample form.

The Frau Gräfin was one of those old ladies whose form and features are apt to prove terrible obstacles in the way of their daughters' matrimonial prospects. No one could look at the younger lady without being convinced that time must inevitably develop her into the counterpart of her mother, nor could any impartial person, scrutinising the lineaments of the elder, fail to perceive that, at some not very remote period, she must have been the exact image of her daughter. What was a comely roundness of outline and youthful healthiness of colouring in the one had become mere obesity and rubicundity in the other; the plump cheeks and flaxen hair of the daughter were cruelly caricatured in the mother's vast countenance, and in the mud-coloured bandeaux which she wore plastered down to her head with a smoothness only attainable, I fancy, by German ladies of advanced years; and when it is added that the Countess had had the mis-

fortune to lose all her teeth, with the exception of one tusk, which (following, no doubt, the natural law of the survival of the fittest) had outlasted its fellows, and now rose defiant from her lower jaw, as if calling the world to witness to its exceptional tenacity of existence, it will be perceived that the good lady was not precisely one of those whose external charms are likely to fascinate a new acquaintance. She was, however, of an innately sociable and amiable disposition; and though she, in common with ninetenths of the rest of humanity, disliked nothing more than raising her voice to the shrieking pitch demanded for conversational purposes by the rattling of a train, she conceived it to be her duty to entertain the Englishman whom circumstances had thrown in her path, and proceeded accordingly to devote herself to that charitable task.

The Countess's education had not gone so far as to enable her to express herself in English; but in the French language she believed herself to be quite at home, and it was in an astonishing rendering of that tongue that she

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addressed her first remarks to Mr. Mainwairing. It must, I suppose, be conceded that society could not hold together if people only spoke when they had something to say; still, there are times when unnecessary small-talk appears a burden greater than anyone has a right to inflict upon an unoffending fellow-creature, and when closing of the eyes and simulated snoring on the part of the victim seems justifiable, if So, at least, thought Mainnot laudable. wairing, as the slow train jogged gently on, and his neighbour discoursed to him of Dresden and its attractions to foreigners, in accents of piercing hideousness. But, for the honour of British politeness, it is gratifying to be able to state that he did not give way to any such temptation, but stood his ground like a man, never even indulging in a yawn till the seemingly interminable journey was at an end. Then, while the Frau Gräfin, assisted by Mr. Howard, was slowly lowering her ponderous person from the carriage-step to the platform, he made his escape, and, catching up Linda, walked by her side down to the ferry, which had now to be crossed; for Schandau stands upon the opposite bank of the river to the railway. Freiherr von Oberndorf, who had hurried Miss Howard away from the station with needless precipitation, fell back reluctantly at his approach, and waited for the rest of the party with a downcast countenance.

The young Saxon officer was desperately in love with Linda. Several weeks back he had interrogated his heart upon the subject, and had arrived at a realising sense of the profound and unalterable nature of his attachment. then, being a true German, and absolutely free from self-consciousness or false shame, he had manifested his passion unreservedly to all such as cared to notice it. He reduced his daily allowance of beer; he became politely distant in his attentions to the ladies of the ballet, with whom he had hitherto been upon terms of easy familiarity; he never smoked a cigar without brushing his teeth afterwards; he took to the use of scent, and bought so many pairs of gloves that his servant, though profiting by this extravagance, could not refrain from uttering a respectful remonstrance against it. From being

a young man of equable and placid temperament, he now showed himself, by turns, boisterously gay and unbearably irritable; and when his brother officers, divining the source of these symptoms, rallied him upon them, and begged to be informed of the name of the lady whose charms had wrought so great a change, he shook his head, with a sad and mysterious smile, and wrapped himself in a sorrowful silence. Herr von Oberndorf had been asked, he would have said that he had never been so wretched as at this period of his life; but in truth I think he enjoyed his misery immensely. He wore upon his watch-chain the key of a box, in which were preserved certain relics which he would not have exchanged for a colonel's epaulettes -a white kid glove, several faded flowers, a broken fan, and a couple of formal invitations to dinner, written in a neat, but not very formed hand. In moments of depression he was wont to spread these treasures out upon the table before him, and sigh so loudly over them that he could be heard in the room below. Herr von Podewitz, his comrade and bosom

friend, surprised him thus occupied one evening, and very nearly quarrelled with him over it, being himself much smitten with the beauty of the fair Engländerin. But true friendship knows no limits, and stops short at no sacrifices. Herr von Podewitz, on being made the depository of his comrade's confidence, magnanimously cast away from him all idea of rivalry, and declared himself willing to do all in his power to further von Oberndorf's suit. His generosity dispersed the gathering clouds 'Like torrents from a mountain source,' the two young men rushed into one another's arms, and embraced with effusion.

'Henceforth,' said von Podewitz, when he had recovered a little from his natural emotion, 'we have no secrets from each other. We strive, both of us, to secure the same object—thy happiness. Therefore I warn thee to be upon thy guard against one Mannerung, an Englishman, who is too often at the house of our good Herr Howardt.'

'He shall die,' responded von Oberndorf, gloomily.

'Na—that will I not say,' said the other, stroking his fair moustache. 'But he is a dangerous fellow. He plays the violin—hu-u-u!' (Here von Podewitz threw back his head, pursed up his mouth, and emitted a sound intended to express unlimited admiration of the musician's skill.) 'I had not believed that an Englishman could produce such sounds! Beware of him, my friend; for we know the power of music upon a young girl's heart.'

With this caution fresh in his mind, Herr von Oberndorf had been greatly perturbed by the long tête-à-tête between Linda and Mainwairing of which he had been an unwilling witness on the Brühlische Terrasse. He had walked up and down the platform of the Dresden station for an hour before the departure of the train for Schandau, with the express purpose of forestalling the violinist by securing the seat next to his lady-love; and so unreasonably exacting are lovers of his description, that he was now furious because his rival had contrived to secure a few minutes of private interview with the adored object. The poor young man,

in short, was in that pitiable state of mind which sees a rival in every male creature, and cause for jealousy in the simplest and most innocent actions. He ground his teeth because Mainwairing helped Linda into the ferry-boat; he could hardly contain himself for rage when the Englishman offered to hold her parasol over her head for her, and he inwardly anathematised poor Frau von Zerlitz, whom he found himself obliged to assist in landing, and whose slow movements enabled the rest of the party to get a considerable start of her and her impatient escort.

By Mr. Howard's forethought, breakfast had been ordered at the Schandau Hotel on the preceding day, and was awaiting the hungry excursionists when they arrived. The landlord, his wife, and the one waiter who constituted all the staff of the establishment at this early season of the year were at the door to receive their guests. Mr. Howard acknowledged their profound bows with a dignified hauteur which immediately raised him in the estimation of these worthy people. Their experience of the

English nation had led them to believe that, with us, an unassuming demeanour bespeaks an empty purse, and that the higher a man stands in the social scale, the more difficult will he be to please.

Mr. Howard must have held similar views; for it was his invariable habit, on entering a strange hotel, to begin by giving as much trouble as possible. He now beckoned the landlord into a corner, and demanded the bill of fare, over which he frowned with silent severity.

'No fish!' he ejaculated, at length. 'Pray, why is there no fish?'

The landlord looked up at the fierce white moustache, the hooked nose, and the stern grey eyes of his patron, and trembled. He excused himself to the best of his ability. It was true, alas! that, in spite of all his efforts, he had been unable to procure the salmon ordered by the gracious Herr. The gracious Herr would kindly take into consideration that the bath-season had not yet commenced, and that there was a difficulty about obtaining delicacies at hort notice. If the honoured Gesellschaft had

timed their visit a little later in the year, he would have been in a position to set before them a repast with which he ventured to think they would have been satisfied. As it was, he had done his utmost, and could only trust that any shortcomings might be generously overlooked.

'Understand me,' said Mr. Howard, not in the least mollified by this humble appeal. 'For myself, I am easily satisfied. Give me a couple of eggs, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of drinkable Rhine-wine, and I am content. But I cannot have my friends starved or poisoned. If I find your meat tough, your salad made with rancid oil, or your omelettes made with bad eggs, I shall not only abstain from employing you again, but I shall take care to let my friends in Dresden know why I am dissatisfied with you.

At this terrible threat the landlord literally shook in his shoes. He reiterated his assurances that he had spared no pains to provide the best breakfast that the circumstances permitted of, and backed towards the door, bowing obsequiously at every step.

- 'Stop!' shouted Mr. Howard, when his host's hand was already on the door-handle. 'Don't attempt to palm off any of your Saxon Champagne on me as Moët and Chandon, do you hear?'
- 'I beg you to believe, milord, that I am incapable of such dishonesty. Also the labels are upon the bottles, for any one to see.'
- 'Labels are easily washed off and gummed on. I know your tricks Have you ordered the carriage to take us to the Kuhstall?'
- 'The horses are even now being harnessed, milord.'
- 'Then the horses are being harnessed an hour too soon. Take care that they are ready when wanted, that's all. Now you can go.'

And, upon the departure of the landlord, Mr. Howard resumed his ordinary aspect of smiling affability, and placed himself at the head of the table, beside Gräfin von Zerlitz, who had listened to the above colloquy openmouthed, and was beginning to doubt whether her entertainer were not a man of much greater

Linda was seated opposite to her father, with Mainwairing upon her right hand and von Oberndorf upon her left. The former, surveying his neighbour in his usual dreamy way, thought he had never seen her look so pretty Her white piqué dress-the work of her own fingers—fitted her perfectly; her hat, also a home production, would not have disgraced a Regent Street window; and the light blue ribbon which encircled her neck was fresh and unwrinkled. Linda had not studied 'How to dress on fifteen pounds a year, as a lady,' that ingenious work not having been given to the world at the time we are writing of; but I doubt whether her annual expenditure greatly exceeded the infinitesimal sum declared therein to be sufficient for a lady's yearly wants. Yet she never looked dowdy. Mainwairing was vaguely wondering why some women of obviously limited resources manage to dress better than others whose pin-money must probably

reach four figures, when a question from Miss Howard roused him from his speculations.

- 'Did you see Miss Tower last night?' she asked.
- 'Indeed I did,' he replied, making a wry face. 'It was just like my luck that she should be dismounting at the door of the hotel at the exact moment when I was going in, with flannels and boating-shoes on. That kind of thing only happens to me.'
- 'Did you tell her where you had been?' asked Linda.
- 'I told her I had been out on the river. I didn't think I was bound to say that I had been to see you.'
 - 'And was she very angry?'
- 'Well, I don't think she was altogether pleased. It did look a little bit rude, you know.'
 - 'I wonder what she thought of you!'
- 'I don't know, I'm sure—and I don't in the least care. Let us talk about something more interesting. May I direct your attention to the fact that, as far as we have got, my pro-

phecy about our respective companions to-day has been very nearly verified? The only point as to which I was mistaken is that I have been told off to Mamma von Zerlitz instead of to her daughter—which is scarcely an improvement.'

- 'Why, to whom are you talking now?'said Linda, laughing.
- 'Oh, to you, for the moment; but it won't last long. Your military friend will seize upon you directly we leave the table, if not before; and I sha'n't get another word with you for the rest of the day. He is looking at me now as if he would like to eat me up, body and bones, for daring to speak to you; and he is listening with all his ears to catch what I am saying. Only, he can't manage it, because I am talking too fast for him, and because he is obliged to pay some semblance of attention to that voluble young lady beside him. If you would like to see the effect of impotent wrath upon the human countenance, just give a glance at him.'

Linda turned her eyes for a second upon her left-hand neighbour, who indeed was looking like a thundercloud. 'How I do detest young men!' she exclaimed, irritably, drumming with her fingers upon the table. 'I thought this one was better than the rest; but he is not—not the least! He has been perfectly hateful the whole morning. Would you do me a very great favour?' she continued, bending forwards towards Mainwairing, and speaking with hurried eagerness.

'Only too proud!'

'Then will you keep beside me for the rest of the day? We shall drive for a few miles from here, in a waggonette, I believe, so that it won't matter then; but afterwards we shall have to walk; and, unless you come to my assistance, I know I shall be left alone with him. And you can't imagine what a nuisance he is!'

'No friend ever yet applied to me for help in vain,' replied Mainwairing, gravely. 'If I had only my own inclinations to consult, I should naturally choose to devote myself to that beautiful and fascinating Countess; but, to please you, I am willing to make a sacrifice. You need feel no further anxiety on the subject. For the next six or seven hours—or even longer, if needful—I am prepared to follow you like your shadow. Is there any other way in which I can be of use to you? If you would like me to entice your young friend to the brink of the river, for instance, and gently shove him in, I shouldn't mind doing it. In fact, I should rather like it.'

'Thank you,' said Linda. 'But I don't think it will be necessary to drown him, poor fellow! After all, I ought not to mind being left alone with him; for he is very kind and pleasant. But he gets so utterly wearisome after a time!'

- 'You will probably say the same thing of me to-morrow.'
- 'No, I shall not. You are quite different. So much older than he is, for one thing.'
- 'I would not mind betting long odds,' said Mainwairing, in a tone of ill-disguised annoyance, 'that when you are my age, you will think yourself still young.'
- 'Oh, I don't call you old,' said Linda, generously. 'Only, you know, there is a

difference between you and Herr von Oberndorf.'

'Well, yes; I don't mind going so far as to admit that, more particularly as you have such a prejudice against youth. At the same time, I don't want you to look upon me as a fogey.'

'I should never have thought of calling you a fogey,' said Linda.

In the meantime Herr von Oberndorf was not enjoying his breakfast at all, though the feast turned out a more satisfactory one than might have been expected, and even elicited a few words of qualified approval from Mr. Howard himself. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the infatuated youth was even aware of the nature of the dishes set before him. partook pretty freely of them all, it is true; but those whose experience includes any knowledge of German officers will be aware that among many excellent qualities, both physical and moral, these gentlemen possess no characteristic more distinctive than that of a noble and unfailing appetite; and I am inclined to think that mere force of habit, and instinctive obedience to the behests of Nature, would have led Herr von Oberndorf to eat with equal heartiness had he been on the brink of execution, instead of being only the victim of that torture of mingled love and jealousy which every son of Adam has to pass through once or twice in the course of his earthly pilgrimage. To the same cause may be attributed a somewhat larger consumption of liquor than was quite consistent with prudence.

By the time that he had emptied the small glass of cognac which was handed to him with his black coffee, the young man's imagination—not in general a very active one—was heated to such a degree by the combined influences of wine and indignation, that he began to see prophetic visions of the most consolatory and triumphant character. In one of these he pictured himself scaling a hideous precipice to secure a flower for which Linda had thoughtlessly expressed a wish. He saw the whole party standing, pale and affrighted, watching the progress of the adventurous climber, who reaches his prize, seizes it, and, descending rapidly,

presents it, with a bow, to the agitated Fräulein, while the Englishman, too cowardly to attempt himself such a feat, sinks discomfited into the background. In another, he imagined Linda venturing too near the edge of a treacherous Her foot slips—she falls, and disappears. Everyone rushes to the edge, only to find that the unfortunate girl has arrested her headlong course by grasping a tuft of brushwood. any moment her hold may relax. Who dares imperil his life upon the chance of saving hers? It is now that the gallant von Oberndorf shows of what stuff he is made. Without a second's hesitation, he swings himself over the brink of the precipice, reaches the half-fainting maiden, and to restore her to her weeping friends is but the work of a moment. The venerable Herr Papa comes forward, with tears in his eyes, and embraces the preserver of his only child. 'The life which you have saved belongs to you,' says he, in accents broken by emotion. Again, it is the poor creature, Mainwairing, who, thrusting himself forward, with his usual officiousness, to help Miss Howard into the ferry-boat, loses his balance, falls into the river, and is being rapidly swept away to inevitable death by the current. Von Oberndorf has his coat and boots off in no time. He casts himself into the stream, rescues the drowning man, and with a few powerful strokes, brings him to shore, a sorry, dripping figure. 'How can I thank you for your courageous presence of mind?' asks the miserable man, through his chattering teeth. 'By refraining, for the future, from obtruding your attentions where they are neither wanted nor appreciated,' responds the magnanimous rival, with crushing, but deserved severity.

Unluckily for the poor dreamer, the day brought with it no realisation of these bright possibilities. No striking incident marked the drive up the sunny valley from Schandau; and though, in the course of the subsequent ascent through budding woods and over stony paths, Miss Howard collected a bouquet of gigantic dimensions, the flowers of which it was composed were culled from the most dispiritingly accessible spots, and it was Mainwairing who gathered them for her. Nor did the young

lady show any disposition to imperil life or limb by an incautious approach to dangerous places. The incident of the ferry-boat remained, to be sure, for the end of the day; but this had from the first appeared an occurrence of doubtful probability, and seemed still more so when the champagne of which it had been born had had time to disperse itself over its imbiber's system.

Early in the afternoon the object of the expedition was reached. This was the Kuhstall, a large natural arch or tunnel on the hill-side, which derives its name from a tradition that, during the troublous time of the Thirty Years' War, the peasantry used to drive their cattle thither, for safety from the marauders. It is one of the lions of the Saxon Switzerland, and is a favourite spot with excursionists. Looking out from the cool shade of its recesses, you discover a wide landscape beneath you—woodlands, hills, valleys, and rocks melting away into blue distance—the whole enclosed in a semi-circular frame of rugged stone. It is a comfortable stage-box, as it were, provided by bene-

short of breath, or not so young as they once were. Gräfin von Zerlitz, to whom the ascent had been pain and grief, sank upon a bench, with an enormous sigh of contentment, as soon as she set foot within this haven of rest, and began to fan her heated brow with a pocket-handkerchief, the size of a table-napkin, while her daughter produced from her pocket a piece of embroidery, and set to work upon it, emitting from time to time an ejaculation of 'Wunderschön!' or 'Reizend!' in the plaintive singsong accents by which German ladies are accustomed to express their appreciation of the picturesque.

They were easily satisfied, these goodnatured people, and not prone to take offence. Fräulein von Zerlitz did not consider herself neglected because neither of the younger men of the party had addressed a word to her since breakfast. She was very well contented to sit beside her mother, to breathe the fresh air, and listen to Mr. Howard's somewhat antiquated gallantries. She laughed a little at these, as she bent over her Stickerei, and thought her entertainer eccentric but very amusing.

Meanwhile Herr von Oberndorf had seated himself on the stone parapet at the mouth of the cavern, and had turned his back to the company. He looked so sad and solitary that Linda's compassion was aroused, and she thought she would go and talk to him for a little. He did not move at her approach, and, peeping over his shoulder, Linda perceived that he was busy tracing with a pencil upon the soft stone, which already bore the names and initials of a multitude of previous visitors, the outline of a big letter L. At this sight Linda's heart became hard again.

'What are you doing?' she asked, in a tone of some annoyance. 'What in the world does
L. stand for?'

Herr von Oberndorf explained that his Christian name was Ludwig.

'Oh!' said Linda, not quite satisfied with this announcement. She made no further effort at conversation, but remained standing where she was; for she could not help suspecting that the Freiherr might proceed to follow his L. by an H.; and, in that case, she was prepared to protest against the likelihood of his bearing the additional name of Heinrich.

The young man did not, however, commit this indiscretion. He finished his L., surveyed it critically, with his head on one side, from various points of view, and then dived into his pockets for a knife wherewith to complete his design. Apparently he had left that useful article at home; for, after a prolonged and fruitless search, he ended by drawing his sabre from his scabbard, and set to work with the point of that redoubtable weapon.

'What a touching testimony to the advance of universal peace!' murmured Mainwairing, who, true to his engagement, had stationed himself at Linda's elbow. 'One has heard of swords being converted into ploughshares, but it never occurred to me before that they might be made serviceable as pen-knives. The Saxon army, it seems, can turn its weapons to some account after all.'

The remark was made in a low tone, but

not low enough to escape the ear of the person to whom it related. He wheeled round, with his handsome young face ablaze with anger. 'The Saxon army,' said he, 'is quite so ready to fight as the English army, sir.'

'I am sure of that,' answered Mainwairing, politely; 'and I don't doubt either your courage or your skill. All I meant to say was that, under existing circumstances, you are not very likely to have an opportunity of displaying either.'

'I beg your pardon, sir,' returned the other,
—(what he said was 'I bake your barton;'
but it is doubtful whether a strictly phonetic
rendering of Herr von Oberndorf's English
would add to the comfort of the reader)—'I
beg your pardon. Before the year is over there
is good chance that we will have war mit
Prussia; and then you will see that we can use
our sworts as good as whoever you please.'

'Well, I hope you may have war, if you wish it; but I don't see much prospect of it myself,' replied Mainwairing, ignorant of the approaching catastrophe of Königgrätz.

- 'And in the meantime,' continued the irate German, 'if I choose to carve a name mit my sabre, I do not think it is the business of anybody but myself.'
- 'Certainly not,' acquiesced Mainwairing, imperturbably.
- 'Then, sir, you have no reason to laugh at me.'
- 'My dear sir, I am not laughing,' began Mainwairing; but Linda twitched his sleeve, and drew him away before he could finish his sentence.
- 'Don't tease him,' she said. 'He is put out, poor fellow, because we have left him alone so long. Go and talk to Fräulein von Zerlitz for a little, while I get him into good humour again.'

Mainwairing shrugged his shoulders, and sauntered away obediently; and Linda seated herself beside the offended warrior, whom she had no great difficulty in restoring to equanimity. He had quite recovered his usual spirits long before he had put the finishing touch to his letter L., which was pronounced by Miss

Howard to be a very successful piece of work, and which visitors to the Kuhstall may inspect and judge of for themselves at the present day, unless somebody has scratched it out.

Gladly would the pacified von Oberndorf have prolonged so pleasant an interview; but, in course of time, Mr. Howard pulled out his watch, remembered that a considerable distance intervened between the Kuhstall and Schandau, and declared that it was time to make a move.

'If we want to catch the steamer for Dresden, we must be off,' said he. 'Come along, Linda; make haste!'

And, standing politely aside to let the ladies pass out first, Mr. Howard gently pushed Mainwairing in front of him, and linked his arm firmly within that of the young German, who was not a little surprised at this friendly demonstration.

'Can it be that the Herr Papa understands my wishes, and is favourable to them?' he wondered. His heart began to thump at the idea. Poor youth! He no more saw that Mr. Howard's object was to bring about a tête-à-

tête between Mainwairing and Linda than he was aware that the knowing old gentleman had made inquiries about his (von Oberndorf's) private fortune, had weighed him in the balance against the son of Sir George Mainwairing, with only one precarious life between him and a fine estate, and had found him wanting.

Thanks, however, to the steepness of the path, which rendered walking arm-in-arm a process of extreme difficulty and discomfort, Herr von Oberndorf effected his escape by-andby, and joined the rest of the party. He did not contrive again to obtain undisputed possession of Linda's ear: but it was at least some satisfaction to him to observe that his rival was not more fortunate; for Miss Howard now chose to devote herself exclusively to the Gräfin von Zerlitz, and never quitted the old lady's side till the carriage was once more in sight.

A waggonette is not a vehicle well adapted for purposes of confidential intercourse; therefore von Oberndorf attempted nothing of the kind during the return drive to Schandau; but when Linda had seated herself, a little apart from the others, on board the steamer, he thought he saw his opportunity, and slipped into the vacant place beside her. It was true that the inevitable and obtrusive Englishman lay stretched on a rug at her feet; but he was smoking a cigar and contemplating the sky, and seemed too much absorbed in his own reflections to offer any serious impediment to conversation.

In truth, Mainwairing displayed no inclination to interrupt the flirtation—if flirtation it were—which ensued. He listened to the fresh young voices above his head rising and falling through the beating of the paddle-wheels, and glanced up, from time to time, at the German's handsome, beardless face with a certain feeling of pity and complacent superiority.

'Poor devil!' he thought, 'he is hard hit—and no wonder! So should I have been, I daresay, ten years ago. Ah, well! one is only once young. At my age a man wants something more than a pretty face and an amiable disposition; he wants connection, or fortune, or some other substantial bait to tempt him into

matrimony. I wonder whether she really cares about that good-looking, thick-skulled young cub? I should hope not; for really he isn't good enough for her. She certainly is one of the prettiest girls I ever saw in all my life; clever too, and kind-hearted. A man might do worse, if he had money enough to be able to please himself, and didn't mind an objectionable father-in-law. In me, of course, it would be simply idiotic to think of such a thing. And yet——. But I suppose she wouldn't take me in any case. She seems to put me upon about the same footing as her father; which has its conveniences, though it is scarcely flattering.

With these and other disconnected thoughts Mainwairing was so much taken up that he never once opened his lips between Schandau and Dresden. The steamer hurried swiftly down with the stream, through winding defiles, and past cosy white villages and yellow cliffs and over-hanging pine woods, and so out to the broad plain where the towers and spires of Dresden rose, fired by the sunset.

Here the Frau Gräfin's antiquated carriage,

with its ill-groomed horses, and coachman clad in threadbare livery and peaked cap, was awaiting the arrival of its mistress. The three ladies and Mr. Howard installed themselves therein, and, having made their adieux to Mainwairing and von Oberndorf, were presently lumbering away, at a slow jog-trot, over the stones.

And now an incident occurred which, though it appeared trifling enough at the time, proved subsequently productive of unpleasant consequences to more than one of the persons with whom this history is concerned. Mainwairing, who had remained, for a second or two, gazing absently after the Gräfin's retreating coach, turned sharply round on his heel, forgetful of the vicinity of the young officer, and, catching his leg on the latter's trailing sabre, came near to falling headlong on the ground.

'Confound it!' he exclaimed, rubbing his shin. Then he added, with a smile, 'I seem fated to fall foul of your sword to-day.'

The words were spoken thoughtlessly, and without any evil intention; but von Oberndorf, in his readiness to take offence at anything the Englishman might say or do, really believed the whole thing had been done on purpose. He turned white with anger, and drew himself up to his full height.

'Berhaps, sir,' said he, 'you shall find my swort yet more in your way before you have done mit me.'

And with that he wheeled about, and marched off majestically—left-right, left-right—as if he had been on parade.

Mainwairing watched him for a moment with mingled surprise and amusement, and then sauntered away towards the Hôtel Bellevue, and forgot his existence.

CHAPTER V.

MAINWAIRING GETS INTO TROUBLE.

The violin which lay in its case in the corner of the drawing-room at Blasewitz was not the only instrument of its kind possessed by Mainwairing. He had two others in Dresden, one of which was intrusted to the keeping of Herr Messner, his instructor, while the third he kept in his room at the hotel, and was in the habit of practising upon, for an hour or more, every day, after breakfast, to the delight of such of his neighbours as were of a musical turn, and, it must be confessed, to the no small annoyance of the rest.

On the morning after the Schandau expedition, Mainwairing was beginning to tune up as usual, when a waiter brought him a limp glazed card, on which was engraved, in sloping

characters, surrounded by flourishes, the name of Graf von Podewitz-Seeburghausen. 'Beg the gentleman to come in,' said he; and while he was still studying the card, and wondering who his polysyllabic visitor might be, the door was thrown open, and an officer, dressed in full uniform, with twinkling eyes and a formidable blonde moustache, entered.

Mainwairing recognised him at once as a merry, good-natured little fellow whom he had met, some weeks before, at Mr. Howard's, and advanced, holding out his hand, which the other somehow did not seem to notice.

'I am very sorry, Mr. Mainwairing,' said the new-comer, bowing profoundly, and speaking with almost tragic solemnity, that I have to visit you upon a most unpleasant business.'

'Indeed!' said Mainwairing, raising his eyebrows slightly. 'Please sit down. And what may this unpleasant business be?'

The Count's jolly round face wore an expression of portentous gravity.

'I am sent,' said he, 'by my friend, Herr von Oberndorf, who says you will understant,

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after what has passed yesterday, that he desires satisfaction from you.'

'A challenge!' exclaimed Mainwairing, laughing outright. 'How absurd! Why, I have no quarrel with Herr von Oberndorf. Certainly, I accidentally stumbled over his sword last night, and I recollect now that he seemed rather unreasonably irritated at the time; but, upon my word, the impression left on my mind was rather that he owed me an apology than that I should offer him any. However, I am willing to say that I am sorry for my awkwardness, if that will satisfy him. Do sit down.'

Herr von Podewitz shook his head, and remained standing.

'It will be more regular that I discuss this with any friends you may please to name, sir,' said he. 'I shall be very glad if the affair can arranche itself without ploodshed; but I must warn you that Herr von Oberndorf will not be content that you apolochise only for the small matter you speak of. There is more behind,' said the little officer, gravely.

'Stupid young idiot!' thought Mainwairing.
'He will bring Linda's name into this foolish business, and get her talked about all over the town. He deserves a good sound thrashing!' Then he said aloud, rather more coldly:

'I am not aware of any other cause of dispute. But as your friend seems determined to quarrel, I suppose one excuse will do as well as another. I don't know much about the étiquette in matters of this kind—we don't fight duels in England, as perhaps you know—but probably I had better refer you to some friend of mine.'

Herr von Podewitz intimated that this would be the proper course. Mainwairing paused in some perplexity. He had very few acquaintances in Dresden whom he could ask to act for him in such a case, and he was particularly anxious that the fracas should, if possible, be kept from reaching the ears of the gossiping English colony. In this extremity he bethought him of a certain M. Lepkine, attaché to the Russian embassy, and a skilful violinist, with

whom he had become tolerably intimate at the house of Herr Messner.

'I will write to M. Lepkine, one of the Russian attachés,' he said. 'Perhaps you may be already acquainted with him?'

Herr von Podewitz bowed assent.

- 'I will write and ask him to receive you at the Russian chancellenie at twelve o'clock tomorrow. Will that suit you?'
- 'Perfectly,' replied the little Count, and, bowing once more, withdrew.
- 'So I am going to fight a duel,' thought Mainwairing, when he was alone again. 'How very ridiculous! And, at the same time, how excessively unpleasant! Of course I shall get shot, or run through the body, if the thing takes place. It is a remarkable fact that I always do get the worst of it in everything. I wonder, now, whether I can't get out of it in some way.'

Mainwairing debated this question, with the help of a pipe, for a quarter of an hour, and finally felt compelled to answer it in the negative. He might, no doubt, decline altogether to meet his adversary, on the ground that duelling has become obsolete among Englishmen: but he knew that such a course would assuredly cause him to be branded as a coward by the whole of his German acquaintance, and he was not philosophical enough to contemplate that eventuality with indifference. over, he had virtually shut himself off already from adopting any such line of conduct by referring Herr von Podewitz to his Russian friend. There was obviously a second alternative. It was sufficiently evident that assurance on the part of the Englishman that he harboured no pretensions to the hand of Miss Howard would prevail upon Herr von Oberndorf to withdraw his challenge. Mainwairing decided at once that he would say nothing of that kind. He was determined that in no case would he allow Linda's name to be brought into the quarrel; and this resolution was uppermost in his mind when he sat down and wrote the following note:-

'Hôtel Bellevue, April 1866.

'MY DEAR LEPKINE,

'I scraped the skin off the shin of my left leg, yesterday afternoon, tumbling over the sword of a young officer—von Oberndorf by name—and, in pursuance, I presume, of the custom of this enlightened country, he has sent a friend to me, this morning, with a challenge in due form. I hope you will not think I have taken too great a liberty in referring this young man to you, and requesting him to call upon you at twelve o'clock to-morrow. His name is von Podewitz, and he says he knows you.

'I am entirely ignorant of the ordinary course of procedure in matters of this kind; but I suppose that, in the event of your kindly consenting to act for me, some conversation will take place between you and Herr von Podewitz as to the origin of the quarrel, and that you will be required to make some apology or concession on my behalf. If so, please say that I am ready to apologise for any clumsiness I may have displayed—I have already done so, in fact—but that I absolutely decline to discuss any

other real or fancied grievance that Herr von Oberndorf may have against me; and should Herr von Podewitz begin to hint at anything of the kind, I shall be much obliged if you will cut him short at the outset.

- 'If you have no other engagement, will you dine with me to-morrow evening, and let me know the upshot of your interview?
- 'I am taking it for granted, you see, that you will be good-natured enough to see me through this stupid business; but I don't know that I have any right to expect that you should put yourself to so much inconvenience.
 - 'The bearer will wait for a reply.
 - 'Very truly yours,
 - 'GEORGE MAINWAIRING.'

Within an hour Mainwairing received M. Lepkine's answer:—

'Enchanted, my dear Mainwairing, to be of service to you in any way! Let your von Podewitz come and find me to-morrow; I shall be ready to receive him. It seems to me that I know his name, and also that of the other;

but in this country all the officers are so much alike that it is difficult to distinguish one from another even when they are present, much more when their backs are turned.

'But what droll instructions you send me, my dear friend! What! you trip upon a gentleman's sword—he challenges you—you apologise—and the affair continues? You do not understand, then, that I cannot allow my principal to fight without any reason? I do not ask for your confidence; but you have placed me in a difficult position.

'Enfin! I will do my best to carry out your wishes. If I can persuade this young man to accept your excuses, so much the better. If not, we will teach him a little lesson that shall keep him in bed for a week or two to think over his impertinence.

'I shall present myself at the Hôtel Bellevue to-morrow punctually at the dinner hour.

'Always yours,

'All very fine,' muttered Mainwairing, as he thrust this missive into his pocket; 'but it seems to me that, if one of us is to be sent to bed, it is not likely to be von Oberndorf, who has probably been fighting duels, more or less, ever since he left school. What a nuisance the whole thing is!'

For the present, at all events, he determined that he would dismiss the disagreeable subject from his mind, and proceed to occupy his day as he had intended to do before Herr von Podewitz's unexpected visit. So he took his way down to the river-side, and, jumping into his boat, pulled up to Blasewitz, as usual.

On his arrival there he found Linda at the piano, and her father seated in a cane chair outside the open window, smoking a cigarette, and reading 'Galignani.' Mr. Howard had discovered in his paper a mysteriously-worded announcement relating to the disclosure of certain scandals in high life, and was chuckling over it gleefully.

'I say, look here,' he whispered, catching Mainwairing by the elbow, and thrusting the interesting paragraph under his nose. 'Here's a pretty kettle of fish! I always said that marriage would end badly. Know the Princess?'

- 'I have met her in Paris,' answered Mainwairing.
- 'So have I.' (And so, indeed, he had—in the Bois de Boulogne.) 'Charming woman! Clever too—uncommonly clever. But not quite clever enough to keep a secret, hey? I'll tell you what it is, Mainwairing—the Prince has got his work cut out for him. Depend upon it, he'll have half-a-dozen duels to fight before he gets to the end of this business.'
- 'More fool he,' said Mainwairing. 'Of all ways of revenging oneself I think duelling is the most absurd. Why on earth, because a man has done me the greatest injury in his power, am I to give him the chance of taking my life into the bargain?'
- 'My dear fellow,' replied Mr. Howard, grandly, 'there are situations in which a man of honour has no alternative.'
 - 'Yes, I know that is the Continental idea;

but I think we are much more sensible in England. If the Prince were an Englishman, he would simply put his wife into the Divorce Court, and there would be an end of the matter.'

'There is no divorce in France; and if there were, I doubt whether Frenchmen would ever be cold-blooded enough to accept it as a substitute for sword and fire. And I am not sure, mind you, that duelling has not its advantages even in cases of less serious offence. It keeps up the standard of manners and politeness, and so on. A man has to be upon his P's and Q's, you see, when he knows that a trifling incivility may cost him the sight of an eye or the use of a leg.'

Mainwairing shuddered involuntarily.

'People must be utter savages,' he said,
'who can't behave themselves without having
pains and penalties of that kind held over their
heads. Besides, I altogether deny that the
system acts as you say it does. The effect of it
is simply to produce a race of bullies, who,
being pretty sure of their own skill with their

weapons, go about the world treading on the corns of their inoffensive neighbours, in order to gain a character for physical courage without running any risk. There is no living creature for whom I have a more complete contempt than a professed duellist.'

And having delivered himself of this harangue, with an emphasis which clearly came from the heart, Mainwairing marched into the house, leaving Mr. Howard a little astonished at his visitor's warmth.

And now the customary crash of chords and the twanging of the violin burst forth. It was impossible to peruse a newspaper with any sort of profit or comfort within a hundred yards of such a din; so Mr. Howard took up his chair, and sauntered away to a more distant part of the garden, whence he did not emerge again till after Mainwairing had left.

There was more honest practising than conversation that day. Mainwairing was in one of his silent moods, and either left Miss Howard's remarks unanswered or replied to them so totally at random that she gave up talking to

him at last as a bad job. But when the time came for him to take his leave, he kept Linda's hand in his rather longer than was his wont, or than the occasion seemed to warrant.

- 'Good-bye, Miss Howard,' he said. 'I sha'n't be able to come to you to-morrow, I'm afraid.'
- 'Sha'n't you?' said Linda. 'How tiresome! But you will come the next day?'
 - 'Yes, if I can. Good-bye.'

And so he walked away quickly towards the river, sighing as he went; for he thought, 'Perhaps I shall never see Linda or Blasewitz again.'

Then the ludicrous side of the situation presented itself to him, and he winced and coloured at his own sentimentality, not being a man who could bear to be ridiculous, even though there were no one to laugh at him but himself.

Mainwairing was as brave a man as another, but he was of a somewhat nervous and irritable temperament; and it must be confessed that the next twenty-four hours—or, at least, those during which he was not asleep, or playing the violin—seemed to him to pass very slowly. He was prepared to take his chance of any ill-luck that fate might have in store for him; but he did not like being kept in suspense. It was, therefore, with unmixed gratification that he hailed the approach of the dinner hour, and dressed himself to receive his Russian friend.

M. Lepkine made his appearance with exemplary exactitude. He was a short, smoothshaven man, whose age it would have required a skilled physiognomist to determine. He was a great favourite in society, particularly among ladies, with whom his musical and histrionic talents, his smart sayings and inexhaustible flow of gossip, made him always a welcome guest. He spoke English, and several other languages. with perfect fluency and scarcely any accent; but he affected the French style of dress and manners, wore his fair hair cut short à la brosse. had very white hands and teeth, a perpetual smile, half jesuitical, half debonnair, on his lips, and was an unmistakable Russian, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot.

'Eh bien, mon cher,' said he, taking his

host's hand in one of his own, while he patted him gently on the shoulder with the other, 'I have arranged your affair for you.'

- 'What! is there to be no duel, after all?' asked Mainwairing, unable to keep his features from relaxing into a slight smile of satisfaction.
- 'Certainly there is to be a duel! It was that that you wanted, was it not?'
- 'Oh, all right!' said Mainwairing, turning away towards the dinner-table. 'By all means let us cut one another's throats if it is necessary. But why you should have thought that I wanted to do anything so senseless I don't know.'
- 'Why, did not you tell me as much in your note? I was to offer an apology, which you seemed to know in advance would not be accepted, and I was to refuse to listen to another word upon the subject.'
- 'Ah, well,' said Mainwairing, 'I suppose there was no help for it. Now let us hear all about your interview.'

The Russian sat down, spread his napkin

over his knees, and laughed to himself, as at some diverting reminiscence.

- 'He is a good boy, that von Podewitz,' said he, 'but a funny fellow. Everything passed, at first, exactly as I had expected. I began by offering excuses, on your part, for your having accidentally stumbled against his friend. "Yes," said he; "Mr. Mainwairing has already apologised to me himself. But that will not do." "Will not do?" said I. "And pray, sir, what more do you want?" Then he began a long rambling story about English insolence, and the honour of the Saxon army, and goodness knows what else, and ended at last by saying that he had a proposition to make. "A la bonne heure," said I. "What is your proposition?" And what do you think it was?"
 - 'I don't know, I'm sure.'
- 'Why, nothing more nor less than that you should leave Dresden within a week, and pledge your word not to return here for a year's time.'
 - 'Cool!' remarked Mainwairing, laconically.
- 'Naturally,' resumed M. Lepkine, 'I laughed in his face. "It only remains now, I think,"

said I, "for us to arrange the place and time of meeting." I had no difficulty with him after that. We fixed upon a meadow that I know of near Tharandt. (Have you seen Tharandt and the Plauensche Grund? A charming country!) The day after to-morrow, early in the morning, is the time agreed upon. There are some little irregularities about the affair; for instance, there should have been two seconds on each side, but we decided to waive that, for the sake of greater secrecy.'

- 'For Heaven's sake,' interposed Mainwairing, 'let us have as few witnesses as possible.'
- 'Just so. I knew that would be your wish. Then as to the choice of arms. We both claimed that; and for a time it seemed as if we should not be able to come to an understanding; but I stood firm, and at last he conceded the point. Apropos, what weapon do you fancy?'
- 'It would be difficult to say with which I should be most awkward,' answered Mainwairing. Can I choose anything I like?'

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'Any recognised weapon.'

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- 'Then I should propose that we attack one another with life-preservers,' said Mainwairing, with grim jocularity. 'That is about the only instrument that I am likely to have the advantage of him with.'
- 'Eh, mon pauvre bon, it is not to preserve your life that he desires, this bloodthirsty Saxon. Are you a good shot?'
- 'Pretty well. I don't think I am much good with a pistol.'
- 'The rapier, then? I could show you a pretty coup. Une—deux!—crac!'

And M. Lepkine, catching up a fork, made two rapid passes with it and spitted an imaginary foe.

- 'Very clever, I daresay,' said Mainwairing, smiling. 'Only, as I have not had a foil in my hand half-a-dozen times in the course of my life, I am afraid it is not likely to be of much service to me.'
- 'Tiens, tiens! You understand neither sword nor pistol, and you provoke a quarrel. Permit me to offer you my compliments on your courage.'

'But I tell you I didn't provoke the quarrel. Surely I have shown that sufficiently by apologising.'

The Russian shrugged his shoulders.

- 'I presumed that your apology was not meant to be serious,' he answered. 'You are pleased to surround yourself with mystery, my good Mainwairing. Never mind. I am the least inquisitive of men. Well, which is it to be—pistol or sword?'
 - 'Which do you advise?'
- 'In your place I should choose the sword. A bullet through the lungs—that, you see, is a serious matter; but a thrust with a sword in the fleshy part of the arm can do no great harm to anybody. And you cannot be touched in any other place, if you only keep cool and steady. For the rest, I will take you to the Salle d'Armes to-morrow; there will always be time to give you a little instruction.'
- 'Thanks, very much. And, by-the-by, Lepkine, I have a favour to beg of you.'
 - 'You have but to speak.'
 - 'Will you, like a good fellow, refrain from

saying a word about this affair to your friends? I have reasons for wishing it to be kept quiet.'

'I am mute,' said M. Lepkine, closing his lips firmly, and tapping them with his fore-finger.

Mainwairing eyed him a little doubtingly.

- 'Are you sure,' he said, 'that you can keep a secret?'
- 'He asks me whether I can keep a secret! I, a diplomat and a Russian! But for what, then, do you take me?'

And M. Lepkine assumed an air of such affronted innocence, that Mainwairing felt ashamed of his ignoble suspicions.

'I take you for a very good-natured fellow,' he said. 'And if I had not trusted you do you think I should have asked you to help me out of this scrape? I shall be very much obliged if you will give me a few hints to-morrow; but in the meantime let us forget, if we can, that such things as duels exist.'

So very little more was said upon the subject that evening; but the next day M. Lepkine, true to his promise, took his friend to the

fencing school, and after a short encounter with the foils was able to prove to him, in the most conclusive and satisfactory manner, that, had the combat been a real one, he must have been killed ten times over in as many minutes.

'Alas, my poor friend!' he exclaimed at last, 'you are of a clumsiness beyond belief. As for attempting to touch your man, you must not even think of it. What you have to do is quite simple. Keep always well behind your sword; never take your eye off your adversary's face; don't allow yourself to be flurried; and perhaps, if you have good luck, you may get off with nothing worse than a scratch.'

With these reassuring words to comfort him, Mainwairing returned to his hotel, and, going to bed early, that he might wake up fresh in the morning, was soon sleeping as soundly as condemned criminals are said to do upon the eve of their execution.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DUEL.

MAINWAIRING woke with a start out of a sound sleep, and saw in the dim, uncertain light of the early morning a figure bending over him.

- 'Who is that?' he asked drowsily, turning over and yawning.
- 'It is I—Lepkine,' replied the figure. 'Wake up; it is time.'

These words acted upon the person to whom they were addressed with all the pleasing effect of a sudden cold shower-bath. He sat up in his bed and rubbed his eyes silently, wishing from the bottom of his heart that he could lie down again and forget all about his unpleasant position.

Of all hours of the twenty-four surely that chill grey one which immediately precedes the dawn is the most melancholy—that hour in which the earth lies brooding under a stillness more oppressive than that of the night; in which cold mists rise from the ground, and the stars grow faint overhead, and souls which have been struggling to escape from their mortal prison since evening most commonly take their flight. I never yet met with anyone who could assume or preserve a cheerful aspect at this particular hour of the day; and I imagine that few people who, for reasons of their own, have caused themselves to be roused before sunrise have ever failed, at the first moment of awakening, to execrate their folly in so doing. What cub-hunting can be exciting enough, what mountain-climbing sufficiently exhilarating, one asks oneself at such a moment, to atone for the miserable discomfort it entails? If only shame did not forbid one to turn over and go to sleep once more! And if the pursuit of pleasure appear inadequate to make up for so great a sacrifice, how deplorable must be the mental condition of a man who opens his unwilling eyes upon the cheerless prospect of a long cold drive, and a duel at the end of it!

M. Lepkine, warned, it may be, by previous experience, had avoided this bad moment by not going to bed at all. It happened that he had been engaged to a ball on the preceding evening, and there he had remained up to the not very advanced hour at which such entertainments close in Germany; after which he had persuaded some kindred spirits to join him in a game of baccarat, and had kept them at it till their exhausted systems could hold out no longer. Then, being a man whom long habit had rendered almost independent of sleep, he had betaken himself to the Hôtel Bellevue, and now stood by Mainwairing's bedside, looking a little red about the eyelids, but not otherwise the worse for his vigil.

'Get up and dress yourself, my friend,' said he, briskly. 'I will wait for you in the next room. We are going to have a delicious morning.'

'All very well for you to talk about a delicious morning!' growled Mainwairing, sotto voce. 'You are not going to have your eye poked out with the sharp point of a sword.

You are not going to make an exquisite fool of yourself for the amusement of a couple of barbarous young ruffians. Much I care whether I am to be assassinated in fine weather or rain!'

But as soon as the door had closed upon the Russian, and he had jumped into his bath, he felt better. The shock of the cold water braced his nerves and revived his spirits. As he rubbed himself vigorously with a rough towel he was sensible of such a degree at least of relief as we have all experienced on being summoned by the dentist's grave butler to leave the choice literature of the waiting-room and enter that dread chamber where the operator, instrument in hand, is ready to welcome us. It is not pleasant to have a tooth drawn, but if go it must, the sooner it goes the better. This excessively foolish and uncalled-for duel had to be gone through, and, that being so, Mainwairing was glad to think that it would be over in a few hours.

It was more the absurdity than the danger of the coming encounter that disturbed him. A hundred years ago, he soliloquised, nothing would have been more usual than that two gentlemen should fall out over a question of jealousy, and nothing more natural than that they should settle their dispute forthwith at the point of the rapier. The propriety of such a course would have been universally recognised; nor would the lady concerned have felt any resentment if she had chanced to hear of it. But nowadays the customs of society are changed. There is no longer any glory to be got out of hostile meetings, nor, indeed, anything at all except annoyance, ridicule, compromising of innocent people, the possibility of fine or imprisonment, and the certainty of a doctor's bill. Mainwairing did not imagine that he ran much risk of losing his life; still less had he any intention of taking that of his antagonist; but when he reached this point in his reflections he made up his mind that, so far as in him lay, he would strive to be the giver and not the receiver of the inevitable swordthrust.

'After all,' he thought, as he stood brush-

ing his hair before the glass, 'one man, with a long arm and a sword at the end of it, ought to be pretty nearly a match for another'—forgetting that the use of a rapier is as much a matter of skill and education as the use of a billiard-cue or a racquet-bat, and that in the game of duelling, as in all other games, a novice is entirely at the mercy of a practised player.

His toilet completed, he entered the little sitting-room which adjoined his bedroom, and there found M. Lepkine outstretched upon three chairs and smoking a cigarette. On the table beside him stood a huge flask and the half of a roll, on which lay a slice of galantine. M. Lepkine pointed to these provisions with modest pride.

'You see I have not forgotten you,' said he.
'Last night at the ball I said to myself, "What the devil! that poor Mainwairing will starve, for he will get no breakfast before he starts from the hotel." And so, when nobody was looking, I went to the supper-table and slipped the refreshment that you see into my pocket. If I have not brought you a cold turkey and a

pâté de Strasbourg it is because evening coats of the present day are made to fit too tightly to the figure. If I had had my paletot on, for example, I should have been able to offer you a greater choice. Enfin! A la guerre comme à la guerre! This flask contains good old Burgundy, which will warm your heart and your stomach. Eat and drink while you can; you will not fight the worse for it.'

'Very thoughtful of you, I'm sure,' said Mainwairing, setting to work upon the galantine. 'I was just beginning to wonder how I should get on without breakfast. By-the-by, Lepkine......'

'Well?'

'I don't suppose anything very tragic is likely to come of this business; still it is as well to be prepared for all contingencies.'

The Russian nodded.

'And in case anything should happen to me, the best thing you could do would be to telegraph to my father. I have left his address in my desk, where you will also find money enough for any expenses that may arise.'

- 'Good—good; depend upon me. But you need fear nothing, if only you will remember what I told you and efface yourself behind your sword. No other instructions?'
 - 'Nothing else, thanks.'
- 'No message to anyone in Dresden? To any lady, for instance?' asked the Russian, with a quick side-glance. 'I am discreet; I ask no questions; but you conceive, my dear friend, that I can hardly suppose Herr von Oberndorf wants to banish you from Saxony for fear you should tumble over his sabre again. Somewhere or other there must be a lady who has caused this mischief.'
- 'There is nothing of the kind,' answered Mainwairing, hastily. 'The whole thing has been the most utter nonsense from beginning to end. It is not essential that there should be a lady at the bottom of every quarrel, is it?'
- 'Assuredly not. And in your case it is easy to believe that no lady is concerned; for I believe you know none in Dresden, except that pretty compatriot of yours who lives out at Blasewitz—I have forgotten her name.'

- 'Miss Howard, I suppose you mean?'
- 'Howard, yes—to be sure! Von Oberndorf is also among her friends—how odd!'
- 'Shall we go now, if you are ready?' said Mainwairing, a little impatiently.
- 'As you please,' said the Russian, smiling, and enveloping the evening costume which he still wore in a fur-lined coat. He moved towards the door, followed by Mainwairing; and the two, stealing softly down the staircase, were soon standing on the wide, deserted Place in the keen air of the morning. A few steps brought them to the corner where M. Lepkine's light phaeton, with its wiry iron-grey horses, was waiting in charge of a groom. The man touched his hat to his master, and looked at the stranger with a mixture of curiosity and amusement which did not escape the latter's notice.
- 'He knows all about it, and be hanged to him!' thought poor Mainwairing, as he seated himself in the phaeton and drew the rug over his knees. 'And a precious fool he thinks me! One thing is tolerably clear: however

the affair may end, there is very little prospect of its being kept a secret long. Even if Lep-kine holds his tongue—which is doubtful—this rascally groom will be sure to entertain his friend with a circumstantial account of the fray. Then there is the porter of the hotel, who will tell his wife, who will tell the washerwoman, who will tell everybody's servants, who will tell their masters and mistresses; and I shall be universally sniggered at. It really is very hard lines.'

And then Mainwairing fell to wondering, as he had frequently done during the last two days, whether Linda would be among the sniggerers. Upon the whole he was inclined to hope that she would not. She had too kind a heart, he said to himself, to make merry over the misfortunes of her friends; and had she not distinctly told him that she included him in that category? Vexed she might be, or angry, or frightened, or sorry, but surely, surely she would not laugh.

Nevertheless Mainwairing was so far from feeling any certainty with regard to this point that he thought of very little else, throughout the long drive, than of how Miss Howard might best be kept in ignorance of the encounter which she had unconsciously provoked.

The phaeton clattered over the stones, waking the echoes in the tenantless streets. and rousing many a heavy-headed citizen from his morning slumber, whirled out into the open country, where the first rays of the sun were falling aslant over the dewy fields, and birds were twittering in the hedgerows, and so hurried on towards Plauen and the picturesque valley known to tourists. M. Lepkine, who possessed a fine flow of easy conversation, and was anxious that his principal should appear upon the ground in good spirits, beguiled the way with a series of piquant anecdotes and with many sarcastic criticisms upon the leaders of Dresden society, of which it is to be feared that the wit was utterly thrown away. For his absent-minded companion had no ears but for the imaginary tones of a full, soft, girlish voice, and no eyes but for the unseen face which corresponded to them. He answered at random

when he answered at all, and maintained a demeanour of such persistent gravity that when the ruined castle of Tharandt, perched on its rocky eminence, came in sight, the Russian deemed it advisable to speak a few words of remonstrance.

'Come, come, my friend!' said he. 'Let us try to look cheerful, whatever we may feel. With your dolorous countenance one would say you were going to your own funeral. We shall arrive in a minute. For the love of Heaven get up a smile, if it were only to show these Germans that you are not afraid of them.'

'Eh?' said Mainwairing, rousing himself.
'I'm all right, old fellow; and I'm not in the least afraid. I don't see much to laugh at; but I will endeavour to produce a grin, if you think it essential. Are we nearly there?'

'Within five minutes' walk,' replied M. Lepkine. 'The others are already waiting for us, you see,' he added, pointing with his whip to a droschke, drawn up by the wayside, you. I.

whose driver started round at the sound of the approaching wheels.

- 'Another witness!' thought Mainwairing, despairingly, as the Russian pulled up behind the other vehicle, and, handing the reins to his groom, swung himself to the ground.
- 'Allons! let us lose no time,' said M. Lep-kine.

And Mainwairing, following his second through a pine-wood and over the shoulder of a rising ground, found himself in a small meadow surrounded by a belt of trees, and shut in on all sides by low hills.

Here the lanky figure of von Oberndorf and the thickset one of his friend, Herr von Podewitz, were discovered pacing leisurely to and fro, in plain clothes, and emitting clouds of tobacco-smoke, which rose straight above their heads in the still, crisp air. There was also a third person, a little fat man, in a tall hat and gold-rimmed spectacles, whom M. Lepkine presently introduced as the Herr Doctor Hirsch. The Herr Doctor bowed, observed that it was a beautiful morning, and that the day would

probably be hot; and then stood smiling blandly, and passing his plump hands slowly one over the other, while a short colloquy, conducted in an undertone, took place between M. Lepkine and Herr von Podewitz, during which Mainwairing took stock of his opponent, and, with that absurdly quick perception of trifles which most people have experienced in any uncomfortable crisis in their lives, noticed how astonishingly the beauty of the human form may be enhanced by the addition of a showy uniform. In truth, Herr von Oberndorf, clothed in an ill-fitting black coat, a tight pair of yellowish-grey trousers, and a wide-awake hat, was as commonplace a looking youth as one could wish to see. Mainwairing could not repress an ungenerous wish that Miss Howard might some day see her friend in this garb.

Herr von Oberndorf, on his side, eyeing the Englishman gloomily, remarked, with much irritation, the slow faint smile which grew upon the latter's lips and the twinkle in his sleepy grey eyes. 'You shall see presently,'

thought he, 'that Ludwig von Oberndorf is not one to be laughed at.'

But now further mutual inspection was arrested, for the two seconds parted from one another with a bow and approached their respective principals. Herr von Oberndorf took off his coat and waistcoat and handed them to his brother officer, and Mainwairing hastened to do likewise. In return he received a sword from M. Lepkine, together with some last words of advice, delivered in an impressive whisper.

'Keep yourself always covered by your arm; never cease to feel his sword for an instant; try to tire him out; thrust only when you are *sure* of touching. Above all, no agitation!'

Thus fortified, Mainwairing threw himself into position and crossed swords with his adversary. It did not take him long to discover his utter powerlessness to inflict any injury upon the German. There had been small need for M. Lepkine to warn him against thrusting without certainty, for what was there to thrust at? All that he saw was a handsome, slightly

frowning face, with lips firmly set, peering above an arm curiously foreshortened, and a flashing line of steel, which twisted and darted hither and thither like lightning. 'It will be over in a minute,' he thought. But he gained confidence with time, and when he had successfully parried three or four lounges in carte and tierce began to hope that his chance might come, if only he waited patiently for it. He did not in the least realise that von Oberndorf was merely playing with him, as a cat does with a mouse, before giving the coup de grâce. was inclined to be pleased with his own sang froid, and was especially careful to comply with that part of his instructions which related to the feeling of his antagonist's blade, flattering himself that, so long as he did so, it would be impossible to get either over or under his guard.

So, though sensible that he was being steadily forced backwards, he in nowise despaired of his case, and was even congratulating himself upon his unexpected proficiency in the art of fencing, when an occurrence took place

which had formed no part of the programme sketched out for him. Suddenly, without any warning, behold! Herr von Oberndorf's sword was gone! A second of utter bewilderment, during which Mainwairing's weapon described widening circles in the empty air, and, whizz! down it came from above with tremendous force, piercing Mainwairing's arm, which he had instinctively thrown up, through and through, and even inflicting a slight wound upon his chest behind it.

This, of course, put an end to the combat. M. Lepkine ran forward to the assistance of the wounded man, and insisted on supporting him, in spite of his protestations that he was perfectly well able to stand alone, while the doctor deftly rolled up his shirt-sleeve and bandaged the injured arm. Von Oberndorf, after looking at the group for a short space, as if undecided whether to join it or not, lifted his hat, without looking at anybody in particular, and moved slowly away.

The little doctor glanced indignantly at him over his shoulder.

'I liked not that thrust. In my young days, gentlemen, I can assure you we knew of no such tricks. Truly a most dangerous thrust! It was nearer to being your death, mein Herr, than perhaps you know. And then to walk off like that, without so much as saying, "I am sorry you are hurt"—it is unheard of!'

But if Herr von Oberndorf displayed, upon this occasion, some want of humanity, his friend, von Podewitz, was less callous. The goodnatured little man came running back, after he had walked for a short distance beside his brother officer, and addressed the doctor, with a face full of sympathy and regret.

- 'Nothing serious, I hope, doctor?' said he.
- 'Serious?' returned the doctor, looking up from his bandages. 'Not in the least. The gentleman will be none the worse for his hurt.'
 - 'So-that is well!'
- 'Not but what things might have fallen out very differently,' resumed the doctor. 'Where, in the Devil's name, did your friend learn that thrust?'

- 'Oh, as for that, the thrust was regular enough,' replied Herr von Podewitz. 'I appeal to M. Lepkine here.'
- 'Regular enough,' acquiesced the Russian.
 'Unfortunately, I had not had time to teach my friend how to parry it; but it was nothing new.'
- 'New to me, at all events,' grumbled the doctor; 'and this is not the first duel I have seen, let me tell you. Perhaps it is also nothing new to do your best to kill your man and then face to the right-about and march away as coolly as if nothing had happened.'

Herr von Podewitz stroked his moustache.

'I am very sorry that anybody should be hurt,' he said, after a pause; 'but you will admit, Herr Doctor, that these gentlemen did not come out here to-day to pay one another compliments. As for me, I hate all duels.'

Then, turning to Mainwairing, and speaking in English, he added—

'I hope, sir, you will soon be yourself again, and that we shall not be worse friends on account of this unfortunate quarrel. I shall now bid you good morning, unless there is any way in which I can serve you.'

Mainwairing had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, by reason of a certain feeling of sickness and a singing in his ears, which had led him to summon up all his energies to keep himself from fainting away—a weakness of which he would have been very sorry to be guilty. But at these last words he roused himself, and answered distinctly, though in a somewhat weak voice—

- 'I shall be all right, thanks. In fact, I believe I am all right now, and I don't want any assistance. But there is one thing you might do for me, if you were inclined to be very obliging.'
- 'And that is?' asked Herr von Podewitz, bending forward politely.
- 'Not to say anything about this in Dresden. I have reasons for wishing that it should not be talked about.'
- 'I understand,' said Herr von Podewitz.
 'And you may trust me, sir. I will be careful

that no report of the matter shall reach the ear of the publikum.'

And with that he solemnly saluted each member of the company in turn and retired.

Mainwairing swallowed a mouthful of brandy at the doctor's request, and, reaching M. Lepkine's phaeton without much difficulty, was soon rolling swiftly once more along the road to Dresden. All things considered, he thought he had got out of his first duel tolerably cheaply.

CHAPTER VII.

MAINWAIRING RECEIVES SOME VISITORS.

It is proverbial that a secret known to three people is no secret at all. Experience has shown that the third person invariably finds himself irresistibly impelled, sooner or later, to betray the confidence reposed in him; and it is obvious that, the greater the number of those cognisant of a mystery, the more speedy will be its unfolding to the world.

Indeed, when we consider the magnitude of the self-denial required from A, when he is entreated not to mention the painful circumstance that B has been discovered cheating at cards; or from Mrs. C, when she is begged to keep to herself the history of Mrs. D's scandalous flirtation with young E, the fatuity of those who try to 'hush up' such matters becomes plainly apparent. A does not, perhaps, personally

dislike B; has no reason for wishing to injure him, and may believe in his repentance and resolution to lead a new life; nevertheless, it is as certain that he will eventually find it necessary to caution X against sitting down to the card-table with him as it is that Mrs. C will feel it her duty to confide Mrs. D's antecedents to the poor Z's, lest they should unwittingly drift into too close a friendship with her, and thus run the risk of moral contagion. Upon the whole, a man whose career contains some episode which he does not care to have talked about will probably act most wisely in himself communicating it to all his friends, in order that it may be the sooner forgotten.

Mainwairing, when he had received a dozen cards inscribed 'With kind inquiries,' began to realise this truth, and to regret the excess of caution which had led him to announce to the servants of the hotel that he had met with an accident which would confine him to his room for a few days, and at the same time to request them to say nothing about it to anybody.

In the afternoon of the day following that

on which the duel had been fought he was sitting in his arm-chair, with a book before him, smoking a pipe and wondering disconsolately how long it would be before the news of his unlucky encounter penetrated as far as Blasewitz, when two or three sharp taps, as from a stick, rattled on his door. 'Come in,' he said, resignedly, and immediately the handle was turned, the door was pushed open by the ivory stick of a parasol, and a young lady entered. She was a tall, handsome, and very fashionablydressed young lady. Her costume of blue silk and white cashmere was so perfectly made that none but a captious critic could have quarrelled with it on the ground of its showiness, and her white felt hat, with its pale blue feather, suited her complexion admirably.

She was also a very self-possessed young lady, for she shut the door behind her, glanced at herself in the mirror over the fireplace, and took a chair, without waiting for any invitation to do so.

'Miss Tower!' exclaimed Mainwairing, rising in some surprise.

- 'Don't look so horrified,' said Miss Tower.
 'Nobody saw me come up, so you won't be compromised. Mamma is out, paying a round of visits. I went with her to two houses; but after that I was so utterly done that I came home. So I thought I would just look you up, and see how you were getting on. Very improper of me, wasn't it?'
 - 'Well-rather,' said Mainwairing, smiling.
- 'Yes; but if one hadn't the consolation of doing an improper thing every now and then, what use would one's life be to one? They say American girls go about with men just as they like—drive with them, and go to the Opera with them, and so on, and nothing is thought of it. How glad I am I was not born an American! There is some pleasure in doing what one ought not; but I have yet to meet the man whose society would be exciting for its own sake. You, for instance, are apt to be very heavy, in spite of all your cleverness. So you are on the sick-list, are you?'
- 'I have met with a—an accident,' began Mainwairing.

- 'So I heard. And you have damaged your right arm. No more violin-playing for some time to come, eh?'
- 'That is the worst of it,' sighed Mainwairing.
 'Goodness knows when I shall be able to hold a fiddle-bow again! It is very kind of you to come and cheer me up. Only, if I had known, I wouldn't have filled the room with smoke.'
- 'My dear George,' said Miss Tower, who had risen, and was investigating the contents of the little sitting-room with some curiosity—Miss Tower occasionally took advantage of her long-standing intimacy with Mr. Mainwairing to address him by his Christian name—'My dear George, do you suppose that I have arrived at my time of life to object to the smell of a pipe?' I shouldn't mind smoking a cigarette myself, if you had such a thing by you.'

No answer being forthcoming to this suggestive remark, she resumed—

'What a jolly little room! You bachelors know how to make yourselves comfortable. You have got a piano, too, you luxurious fellow!' She seated herself upon the music-stool as she

spoke, and, after striking a few chords, began to sing. Miss Tower's voice was her strong point. It was a pure contralto, neither powerful nor cultivated, but true and sweet and sympathetic—a voice whose low notes were as delicious as those of a nightingale—a voice which seemed to have lost its way and got into the wrong lungs, so little did it harmonise with the outward appearance of its owner. She sang first a plaintive Italian ballad, and then broke out with Gounod's 'Printemps,' a charming song, of which every note seems jubilant with the awakening joy and strength of spring; and so well did she render both the words and the accompaniment that Mainwairing could not refrain from drumming his heels on the floor, by way of applause-hand-clapping being, under existing circumstances, impossible to him.

'Do you think I am improving?' she

'Undoubtedly. But you don't practise enough. Your voice is nothing to what it might be if you gave up a couple of hours every day to your scales.'

- 'I hate scales,' said Miss Tower.
- 'Of course you do; so does everybody; but you can no more get out your voice without them than you can row in a race without training. Your voice is like your arms and your legs: you can never discover its power till you have thoroughly exercised it.'

Here Mainwairing, having got upon one of his hobbies, proceeded to deliver a dissertation upon the art of educating the vocal organs, which, being neither novel nor interesting, may as well be omitted. It took him ten minutes to exhaust his subject, and while he was talking Miss Tower continued to run over, softly, the rippling accompaniment of her song. Then, when he had quite done, she whirled suddenly round upon her music-stool and said, in the quietest and most matter-of-fact way in the world—

'And now let us hear all about the duel.'

Mainwairing was not much taken aback. He had suspected from the first that Miss Tower's visit was not prompted solely by motives of humanity.

- 'If you know that there has been a duel, and that I have had a hole poked in my arm, you know about all there is to tell,' he said.
- 'All that you intend to tell me, you mean Of course I know there has been a duel. When a gentleman leaves his hotel at sunrise and returns before breakfast, with his arm in a sling, and accompanied by a friend and a doctor, it doesn't require a conjuror to guess what he has been about. At the same time I think you might be a little more communicative. It wouldn't hurt you, and it might amuse me. Well—she is a pretty girl, I admit.'
- 'Who is a pretty girl? What on earth do you mean?' asked Mainwairing, not over civilly.
- 'Tell me,' resumed Miss Tower, 'are you really very much in love with her?'

There was a suppressed eagerness about the tone in which this question was put which might have suggested flattering possibilities to the mind of a self-appreciative man. But Mainwairing only frowned and made an impatient movement.

- 'In love with whom? I really haven't the faintest idea of what you are talking about,' he said, mendaciously.
- 'Because, if you are not,' continued Miss Tower, 'the best thing you can do is to make a bolt for it. Everybody is talking about this duel, and you certainly have compromised the girl, in a way. She has got a pull over you now; and you are just the sort of lazy, selfish man who always does go to the wall on these occasions.'
- 'I don't think I am selfish at all,' said Mainwairing. 'And really you are running away with an altogether mistaken notion.'
- 'So, if you will take a friend's advice,' continued Miss Tower, ignoring the interruption, 'you will be off somewhere at once for change of air. You really want a change; you are looking wretchedly pale and pulled down. Stay here another week, and you will find yourself engaged to that girl, as sure as you sit there. And you know as well as I do that, if you married her, you would regret it to the end of your days. You had better be off while

you can. Four o'clock! Good gracious! I must be off myself, or my esteemed parent will come in and want to know where I have been.'

She got up and moved towards the door.

'Take my word for it,' she said, turning round, with her hand on the lock, 'your name is Walker. Ta-ta!' And so vanished.

Mainwairing, as soon as he was left alone, began to pace up and down the room in considerable anger and vexation. He was very much put out by Miss Tower's cool impertinence; but perhaps he would not have resented it so keenly had he not felt that there was a germ of truth in her assertion that he had compromised Miss Howard—not so much by fighting with von Oberndorf as by his frequent and prolonged visits to Blasewitz. He admitted to himself, ruefully, that these visits, which had been so innocent and pleasant in their time, ought not to be resumed. There had been a sort of tacit understanding between him and Linda that their friendship was of a purely Platonic character, and that the difference in

their ages was sufficient to warrant them in passing mornings and afternoons together alone and unchaperoned. But it was evident that outsiders—such as Miss Tower, for instance—could hardly be expected to adopt a similar view of the intimacy; and Mainwairing, now that he was forced to look the thing in the face, could not but acknowledge that friendships between persons of the opposite sexes, though agreeable enough to the man, are apt, in the end, to prove very damaging to the lady.

He was too sincerely attached to Linda—so he told himself—to be indifferent as to what her little world might say or think of her. Besides this, he began to be conscious, in the depths of his heart, of certain disquieting symptoms which warned him that he might indeed do wisely to take Miss Tower's advice and leave Dresden.

The sensation of running away is never an agreeable one; but there are certain dangers which increase, instead of growing less, when confronted; and the more Mainwairing thought over his position the more he became con-

vinced that, in the present case, prudence, propriety, and possibly also duty, commanded him to beat a retreat. But not on that account was he the less sensible of the sacrifice which he had almost made up his mind to make. was a grievous thing to him to abandon the easy, unconventional intercourse which had formed the great charm of his life in Dresden; and the dim, old-fashioned drawing-room at Blasewitz had never seemed so home-like, nor the shady garden so peaceful, nor the slight, girlish form, which was inseparably connected with both, so dear as now, when he was contemplating the casting of all these out from his life for ever. He even went so far as to ask himself whether, when all was said and done, it would be such a fatally foolish thing to offer his hand and name to the unknown and penniless girl, and take the chance of her accepting them. For a moment he more than hesitated: but then the vision of her father, vulgar, patronising, and familiar, rose up before him and appalled him. No, he said to himself-he would go away, and he would conquer this

insane longing. No doubt the task would become easy with the lapse of time. He was not a boy, to break his heart over a fancy, nor a fool, to rush headlong into a connection of which he might learn hereafter to feel ashamed. Decidedly he would never accept as a father-in-law a man who was not a gentleman.

It was at this unpropitious moment that the door was once more flung open from without, and that a waiter, standing aside to admit somebody who was following closely upon his heels, announced—'Herr Howard.'

Mr. Howard made his entrance much as if he were a tenore robusto, advancing, after the time-honoured fashion, to the foot-lights, preparatory to bellowing forth a tale of woe into the ears of an appreciative audience. He came forward with a quick, agitated step, and stretched out both his hands towards his disabled friend, while his countenance expressed the deepest sympathy and concern.

- 'My dear boy!' he cried; 'my dear Mainwairing, what is all this?'
 - 'How do you do, Mr. Howard?' said Main-

wairing, holding out his left hand with frigid politeness. But Mr. Howard was not to be put off in that way.

'I can't tell you how vexed I was when I heard of this affair,' he said, seating himself in an arm-chair. 'As for young von Oberndorf, I am very much displeased with him-very much displeased indeed. I am still quite in the dark as to the true facts; but, unless he has some more satisfactory explanation to offer than I anticipate, I shall feel it my duty to forbid him my house. Of that, no doubt, I shall be better able to judge presently; but I am anxious to say at once, Mainwairing-in fact, my chief object in coming here was to say—that I am convinced that you have been in no way to blame. In no way to blame,' repeated Mr. Howard, nodding his head emphatically, as though some assertion to the contrary had been made.

There was an assumption of virtuous magnanimity about Mr. Howard's voice and manner as he made this announcement which exasperated his hearer as much as it surprised him.

- 'You are very good,' he said, lifting his eyebrows slightly.
- 'Not at all, my dear fellow, not at all! I simply do you justice. And how are you getting on? Pretty well, I hope. Arm very painful?'
- 'It is nothing of any importance, thank you,' replied Mainwairing, resisting a strong inclination to show his visitor the door.
- 'Well, well, I hope not. And now tell me all about it.'

Thus, for the second time that afternoon, was this obnoxious request made to the unfortunate duellist. If he had not chosen to satisfy Miss Tower's curiosity he was assuredly not disposed to be more communicative with his present interrogator; and it was with visible impatience that he answered—

- 'Really, Mr. Howard, if you will excuse me, I should prefer talking about anything else. The subject is not a very pleasant one to me, and I am heartily sick of it.'
- 'Come, come, Mainwairing,' said Mr. Howard, 'this is hardly fair! All sorts of reports are going about—I don't believe them, as I told

you—still, there they are; and really I think I have a right to expect that you should be more frank with me.'

'May I ask what reports?' inquired Mainwairing, quietly. But he guessed, only too accurately, at what their nature must be.

Mr. Howard dived into his pocket and produced from thence a copy of a newspaper—the Sächsische Beobachter—which he pushed across the table, indicating a corner of the first page with his forefinger.

'Read that,' he said.

Mainwairing took the paper, and, after a struggle with crabbed characters and involved construction, arrived, at length, at the sense of the following paragraph:—

'Yesterday occurred, in the neighbourhood of the Plauensche Grund, a determined and, only through the forbearance of one of the combatants from having a fatal termination prevented duel between the Freiherr von O——, an officer in the Royal Body-Guard, and Herr M——, an Englishman, who seemingly possesses all the eccentric qualities of his nation.

'The history of the quarrel, which we report under all reserve, is sufficiently characteristic and amusing. It would appear that Herr M——, having become enamoured of Fräulein H——, a beautiful and accomplished English lady, at present residing near Dresden, made lately to her an offer of his hand and estates, which last cover, it is said, more than half of the large county of Manchester. The lady, not wishing to decide immediately upon so momentous a matter, begged for twelve months to consider Herr M——'s proposal, and requested of him that he should absent himself during that period. Herr M—— agreed to these conditions, and took his leave.

'But now what does this original? He swears by all his gods that if he is himself to be debarred, for a year, from entering the house of his beloved, no other man shall enjoy so great a privilege. He stations himself before the lady's gates and watches.

'Seeing, a few days afterwards, the Freiherr von O—— in the act of leaving the house of Fräulein H——'s father, he darts out and places himself in his path. "No one enters that house but by my permission!" says he. Naturally the young officer resents such interference with his liberty of action, and declines to pay any attention to Herr M——'s orders.

- "Then," says the Englishman, "one of us must die; for I have sworn that no man shall speak to Fraulein H-— before this time next year!"
- 'From this it has resulted that, in spite of the pacific disposition of the Freiherr von O—— and the efforts of the Herr Graf von P—— upon the one side, and of a distinguished diplomatist, well known in the fashionable society of our brilliant capital, upon the other, the above referred-to hostile encounter has taken place.
- 'Fortunately Herr M—— is no good swordsman. The fury of his onslaught was easily checked by his antagonist, and it is to the skill and generosity of the same that he owes it that he has now no worse misfortune to deplore than a wound in the arm, which will confine him for a short time to his hotel, and prevent him from mounting his customary guard at the gates of his beloved.

'Whether the Freiherr has profited by this circumstance to renew his visits to the fair lady we know not.'

Long before Mainwairing had arrived at the end of this outrageous narrative he had guessed at the source from whence it emanated. Ah, treacherous Lepkine! Who but he could have constructed so circumstantial a statement upon the frail foundation of von Oberndorf's absurd demand that his rival should remain a year away from Dresden? Who but he would have ventured to place such a tissue of falsehoods before that 'publikum' which Herr von Podewitz had charged himself with keeping in ignorance of the affray?

- 'I will never trust a Russian again as long as I live!' exclaimed Mainwairing, dashing the newspaper down upon the table, and starting to his feet in much wrath.
- 'A Russian?' said Mr. Howard, interrogatively. 'Well, as I said before, I don't in the least blame you; but in cases of this kind it is generally best not to trust anybody. This newspaper story is, of course, untrue——'

- 'It is scarcely worth while to contradict such palpable rubbish,' said Mainwairing, still fuming.
- 'Just so; but the more absurd a story is, the more certain it is to be believed. It is very annoying to me that my daughter's name should be dragged into print in this way—for we may take it for granted that everybody will know who is meant by Fräulein H——. Very annoying indeed.'
- 'Not more so than it is to me, I can assure you,' said Mainwairing. 'I hope you will believe me when I tell you that my quarrel with Herr von Oberndorf was brought about simply by an unintentional piece of awkwardness on my part, and that Miss Howard's name was never once mentioned between us.'
- 'Yes; but the ostensible cause of a dispute is not always the real one,' said Mr. Howard. 'I was quite sure, from the first, that you would never have acted in any way—er—disrespectful to my daughter or myself; but you spoke, just now, of being sorry that you had trusted somebody. That looks, you know—I don't say it

is so—but it looks as if you were concealing something. Now, don't you think it would be better if we were perfectly open with one another?'

'By all means,' answered Mainwairing, who had resumed his seat. 'I am endeavouring to be so.'

Mr. Howard smiled, and shook his head gently, as if he thought he was scarcely being met in so friendly a spirit as he was entitled to look for.

'The subject we have to speak about is rather a delicate one,' he said, 'and I should have been glad to avoid it; but my duty as a father leaves me no alternative. You must see, Mainwairing, that, whatever the truth may be, people will be sure now to make remarks about you and Linda; and unluckily your intimacy with us—an intimacy which I am sure has afforded me personally the greatest pleasure—will be likely to give ground for a good deal of foolish gossip. In this censorious world it is, unfortunately, impossible for two young people to meet so regularly as you and

Linda have done without exciting some comment.'

'I can only say that I am very sorry,' said Mainwairing. 'I ought, of course, to have known that, and to have made my visits less frequent.'

'Not at all!' said Mr. Howard, dismissing the apology with a gracious wave of the hand. 'If there has been any imprudence, I alone am to blame for it. In general I am obliged to be very particular about admitting young men into my house: my position as the father of a mother-less girl requires the utmost circumspection. But in your case I have ventured to relax somewhat of my ordinary strictness. The truth is,' continued Mr. Howard, patting Mainwairing on the shoulder with friendly, and almost paternal familiarity, 'that I have always liked you. I saw that you and Linda understood one another—got on well together; and—and—well, I like to see young people happy.'

Good Heavens! what was the man going to say next? Mainwairing hastened to check him while it was yet time.

- 'You have been most kind and hospitable, Mr. Howard,' said he; 'and I am very much indebted to you. But I quite agree with you that we can't pretend to disregard gossip. When you came in I was just making up my mind to be off somewhere for a little change; and what you have said quite decides me. I shall start as soon as I can get leave from the doctor.'
- 'Oh, but my dear fellow,' interrupted Mr. Howard, who perhaps had not intended to lead up to this simple solution of the difficulty, 'I really couldn't think of putting you out in that way.'
- 'You will not be putting me out at all,' answered Mainwairing. 'I should probably have gone, in any case. Shall you spend the summer at Blasewitz?'
- 'Well, yes, I think so. The situation is healthy, and the place suits us, and—yes, I think we shall certainly stay where we are till the autumn.'
- 'Then might I ask you to be so kind as to take charge of the violin I have left at your house till I come to claim it? I don't know

when I shall go back to England, but I shall manage to take Dresden on my way home, and then I shall hope to say good-bye to you and Miss Howard. By that time I trust this preposterous newspaper paragraph will have been forgotten.'

Mr. Howard protested, for a time, against Mainwairing's determination; but, finding him resolute, gave way, promised that every care should be taken of the precious violin, declared that he should look forward anxiously to the return of the traveller, and, shortly afterwards, with many expressions of good-will, took his leave.

If the worthy gentleman's design, when he entered the Hôtel Bellevue, had been to secure an eligible son-in-law; if he was mortified and disappointed at the failure of that design; and if he was now far more disposed in his heart to kick Mainwairing than to shake hands with him, it must be allowed that he behaved himself very creditably under trying circumstances, and accepted his defeat with a good grace.

CHAPTER VIII.

LINDA'S FIRST OFFER.

DURING Mr. Howard's absence on the mission dictated by paternal solicitude Linda had been passing a somewhat agitated day at home.

She was sitting before the piano, practising, as usual, after breakfast, and wondering not a little what could have caused Mainwairing to absent himself from Blasewitz during three whole days, when Lieschen burst into the room, without waiting to knock at the door, and approached her young mistress, wringing her hands and giving vent to many ejaculations indicative of dismay.

'I know what it is,' said Linda, at once, with the calmness of despair. 'You have broken the Dresden china candlesticks at last.

Oh, Lieschen, I always told you how it would be if you would persist in whirling your duster about so wildly!'

'Alas! gracious Fräulein,' said Lieschen, 'the china is safe. Ah, if it were but the loss of a useless pair of candlesticks!'

There was a depth of woe in the woman's manner, and withal a certain suppressed enjoyment, such as is apt to characterise the bearer of ill tidings, which made Linda's heart beat with a vague dread.

- 'Papa?' she exclaimed, apprehensively.
- 'The gracious Herr is well, so far as I know,' replied Lieschen.
- 'Then what can have happened?' asked Linda; for she could not conceive of any very terrible catastrophe so long as her father was in safety.

But Lieschen could only moan, 'Ach, Herr Je!—Herr Je!' and turn up her eyes to the ceiling.

'How silly you are, Lieschen!' exclaimed Linda, tapping her foot impatiently on the floor. 'If you have anything to say, do be quick and say it! What is the use of standing there making faces?'

- 'He with the violin!' groaned Lieschen, thus adjured.
- 'Well, what of him?' asked Linda, her heart beginning to beat again.
- 'Killed in a duel with Herr von Oberndorf!' cried Lieschen. 'At least, nearly killed,' she added, in an undertone, as if half-regretting the necessity of thus modifying the horror of her intelligence.
- 'A duel with Herr von Oberndorf!' repeated Linda, incredulously. 'What nonsense! Somebody must have been hoaxing you, Lieschen.'
- 'Alas! gracious Fräulein,' said Lieschen, shaking her head, 'it is only too true. Christine met her cousin, Hans Meyer, who is servant to the Freiherr, at the market this morning, and he told her all about it. It seems that the fight took place about sunrise yesterday, close to Tharandt, and that the poor Herr Engländer was carried away all but dead.'
 - 'But it is impossible!' exclaimed Linda.

'What could Herr von Oberndorf and Mr. Mainwairing have to fight about?'

'That Hans did not know,' answered Lies-'But as for me, I can guess,' she added, with a smile, which she speedily repressed, remembering the sadness of the occasion. 'Ach, du lieber Gott!' she cried, 'what a madman is a man in love! That have I proved myself. There was big Jakob, the blacksmith's son, a stupid fellow enough, but very fond of me. He followed me about everywhere, and would let me have no peace. Well, it was one day last winter that I happened to meet young Eisert, from Pillnitz, in the street, and as we were talking together up comes Jakob, and was for breaking the poor young fellow's head then and there. Now, Eisert, though he is not so big as Jakob—and for my part, I often say "a big body has small brains"—is no coward. He had his coat off in a minute; and if I had not thrown myself between them, and screamed____'

Linda began to think it was time to check the loquacity of her handmaiden. 'You had better go back to your work now, Lieschen,' she said. 'If there is any truth in this story I shall hear it from Mr. Howard, when he comes in; but most likely it will turn out to be all a mistake. If Christine were not so fond of gossiping perhaps she would not forget her commissions so often as she does.'

For all that Linda was a little uneasy. She recollected the short altercation which had taken place at the Kuhstall; she understood, as well as any other girl would do, the nature of von Oberndorf's sentiments towards her; and this knowledge, coupled with Mainwairing's unaccountable absence, led her to fear that there might be some foundation for Christine's report. The worst of it was that there was no chance of her being put out of her suspense till the approach of the dinner-hour should bring Mr. Howard back from Dresden. should turn out that he had heard nothing of the alleged duel at the club, it might safely be assumed that no such encounter had occurred.

In this state of uncertainty the dull, mechanical routine of scales and exercises soon became intolerable. Linda speedily closed the piano and betook herself to the garden, where the lilacs and laburnums were swaving and whispering under a gentle southerly breeze, and the flower-beds, out in the hot sunshine, were all ablaze with the gaudy tulips. Snipping off a dead leaf here and pulling up a weed there, she wandered slowly down to the river-side, in some faint hope of seeing the sharp nose of Mainwairing's boat shoot round the corner, as she had so often seen it do before. For a long time she sat idly on the bank, waiting in vain for the familiar sound of the oars, and more than once she started when some noise from the distance smote her ear, and listened eagerly for a minute or two; but nothing came to dispel her anxiety. An ugly black barge came slowly sailing down the stream; a steamer, filled with passengers, bustled past on its way to the Saxon Switzerland, defiling the pure air with its foul smoke, and sending a long swell to break upon the shore; but no Mainwairing

appeared, and Linda's mind became filled with gloomy forebodings.

At length a step on the gravel path behind her caused her to turn her head. It was Lieschen, who, with her hand upheld to shade her eyes, and a countenance expressive of mingled triumph and awe, had come in search of her mistress.

'Herr von Oberndorf ist im Salon,' said she briefly, not wishing to weaken the effect of her announcement by any comment there.on.

By Mr. Howard's orders no male visitor, Mainwairing excepted, was permitted to enter his house during his absence; but Lieschen had thought that the present circumstances were exceptional enough to justify her in departing from her ordinary instructions; and Linda was probably of the same mind, for she expressed no surprise or disapproval at the admittance of Herr von Oberndorf, but only much relief.

'This will teach you, Lieschen,' said she, 'not to listen to all the silly stories that Christine tells you. If Herr von Oberndorf had just killed one of our friends in a duel do you think he would have ventured to come here to-day?'

Lieschen said nothing. She thought he certainly would. To her mind nothing could be more evident than that the young gentleman, smitten by remorse, had come to avow his crime and to declare his hopeless attachment to Fräulein Linda, preparatory to putting an end to his own miserable existence. Therefore she followed her young mistress silently towards the house, expectant of a harrowing and dramatic scene.

Linda entered the drawing-room and held out her hand to von Oberndorf, who bowed over it, glancing up apprehensively at the same time, for he did not know what news might have reached Blasewitz, and had been troubled with a painful uncertainty as to the nature of his reception. The conversation which ensued was carried on in English—which was rather hard upon poor Lieschen, who had stationed herself very near the keyhole, so as to be at

hand in case her mistress should faint or otherwise require her services.

Linda began by expressing her regret that her father was not at home, and von Oberndorf murmured something to the effect that he had been sorry to hear as much from the servant.

'But I have taken the liberty to ask for you, Miss Howard,' he continued, 'as I have something to say—it was rather particular——'

Linda was a little frightened, but she did not choose to help him out.

- 'Yes?' she said, smilingly.
- 'You have not seen—you do not perhaps take in the Sächsische Beobachter?'

Linda said 'No.'

'It is a most wicked lie that they have printed,' resumed von Oberndorf, growing angry at the recollection; 'and so soon as I have read it at once I have said to myself, "I must go to Blasewitz and tell them that it is not my fault." Truly I have done my best to keep the affair from being known; but these Journalisten, see you, they must have their

finger in everybody's business. I do not yet know who has written this falsehood, but I shall find him; and, when I have found him, I shall pull his nose. Yes, by the nose I shall pull him!' And Herr von Oberndorf began to stride about the room, twirling his nascent moustache fiercely.

Presently he calmed down a little and seated himself again.

- 'You see,' he resumed, 'it is not easy to prevent people from finding out about a duel. There are so many who must know of it; and one cannot keep them all from talking.'
- 'A duel!' cried Linda, starting up. 'Then it is true that you have fought with Mr. Mainwairing, and wounded him dangerously! The servants told me; but I would not believe it. I wonder that you have the courage to come here after doing such a thing. If he dies, I shall always consider you a murderer!'

The stalwart soldier looked very like a naughty little schoolboy.

- 'I could not help it,' he murmured.
- 'Could not help it!' echoed Linda, scorn-

- fully. 'Why, what forced you to do it? You ought to have fired in the air.'
- 'But we have not fought mit pistols,' said poor von Oberndorf, humbly.
- 'It is the same thing. I am sure Mr. Mainwairing would never have fought if you had not driven him to it. And if you have killed him, I hope—yes, I hope with all my heart that you will be guillotined for it.'
- 'Oh, but Miss Howard,' protested the culprit, wincing under the unmerited cruelty of this attack, 'you are too severe—indeed you are! It is not so bad as you think; oh! no. A wound in the arm—now, that is no great matter; I could show you on my own arm four or five such scars. It is true that I have found myself obliged to thrust a little stronger as I have meant; but—Gott in Himmel!—it has never yet been heard that a man should die for such a bagatelle.'
- 'Is it no worse than that?' asked Linda, breathing more freely. 'Are you quite sure?'
- 'I would not tell you what was not true,' replied von Oberndorf, with a quiet dignity

which made his assailant feel rather ashamed of her vehemence.

'It must have hurt him dreadfully,' she said, after a pause.

Von Oberndorf felt that it was rather too much to expect of him that he should sympathise with the sufferings of his late antagonist. 'It would not have been a difficult thing to hurt him much more,' he said. 'He knows not at all how to use his sword, your friend.'

'Then why did you pick a quarrel with him? It was not generous of you—no, nor very brave either, seeing that you were sure to get the best of it.'

'He has had the choice of weapons,' said the German, doggedly, and a little sulkily. 'And now I must say that I have conceded that to him, though it was my right; for it was he who insulted me.'

'You imagined he meant to insult you,' said Linda, decisively; 'you are always imagining things. I suppose there has been an account of the duel in the *Beobachter*, has there not?'

Herr von Oberndorf scratched his head and

moved uneasily in his chair. Fain would he have escaped from the self-imposed task of relating to this impetuous young lady the story published in the Dresden newspaper; but, having gone so far, he could not see his way to retreat; so he produced the mendacious sheet, and read out the paragraph as rapidly as possible, concluding with a repetition of his threat with regard to the unknown author of the falsehood. 'I have not yet had time to discover that rascal,' he said; 'but I shall do so; and, when I do, I shall pull him by the nose!'

'I don't see what use that will be,' said Linda, laughing a little, in spite of her vexation. 'How horrid it all is! Papa will be so angry!'

Herr von Oberndorf, thinking this very probable, said nothing, and stroked his moustache meditatively.

- 'It is all your fault,' went on the pitiless Linda. 'How could you be so foolish as to quarrel with Mr. Mainwairing?'
- 'I do not like him,' answered von Oberndorf, meekly.

'So the old woman said, when they asked her what had induced her to murder her son; but that did not save her from being hung. Do you make a habit of going about the world stabbing people who do not happen to suit you?'

'It was no stab; it was a fair sword-thrust,' said von Oberndorf. 'And he insulted me. But it was not that. I had my very good reason to hate him; and I do not think he loves me.'

'What possible reason can you have for hating a man whom you are hardly acquainted with?' asked Linda, with a fine assumption of innocence.

'Oh, Miss Howard!' said the young officer, raising his eyes reproachfully, 'can you ask that? Have you not seen?—do you not know?'

With a presentiment of what was coming, and a strong desire to avoid it, if possible, Linda jumped up abruptly and walked to the window.

'How close it is getting in this room!' she.

said. 'Shall we go into the garden and talk about something else? Never mind your antipathy to Mr. Mainwairing; I don't care to know the cause of it; and, as you can't well fight him again, it doesn't much signify.'

But von Oberndorf had crossed the Rubicon, and was determined to know his fate now, be the issue what it might. He followed Linda to the window, and said, in a low, grave voice—

'Will you be so kind and listen to me for a few minutes? I hate your friend because he is always with you. He sees you every day, while I must be content with a few words in a week. And he is clever—that can one not deny—and can talk upon any subject you please, whereas I, as you know, am, unfortunately, very stupid. And then he is wonderful upon the violin. Though I also am musical, and play the French horn,' added von Oberndorf, with comical seriousness, as if it were only justice to himself that he should mention such advantages as he possessed to set against those of his formidable rival.

'I did not think to have spoken so soon,' he went on; 'but now the occasion has come of itself, and I am glad of it, for it is better for me that I should be no more in uncertainty. Miss Linda, I have loved you ever since the first day I saw you, when your father brought me here one evening to dinner. Do you remember it? It was winter, and you wore a grey dress, and had cherry-coloured ribbons in your hair and round your neck; and, after dinner, you sang for us. From that day till now I have known no peace. I know very well that I am not good enough for you; but sometimes I have thought that so much love could not exist without some little return. Oh. Miss Linda, if you could ever become my wife, I would ask nothing better as to serve you on my knees for the rest of my life!'

And he made as though he would at once assume that inconvenient attitude.

It was thus that Miss Howard received her first offer of marriage. At a later period of her life such episodes became so frequent as to occasion her little or no emotion, and in no way to embarrass her for the want of suitable words in which to couch a refusal. But at this time the sensation of being proposed to was a novelty, and by no means a pleasant one, to her. If she had followed her inclinations she would have taken to her heels forthwith and fled; but, as such a procedure was obviously out of the question, she began, in sore perplexity, to cast about her for the least offensive mode of rejection discoverable. That her answer must be in the form of a rejection she did not for one second hesitate to decide. liked Herr von Oberndorf very much; she had been pleased with his attentions, and perhaps, as she now confessed to herself with a pang of self-reproach, she had flirted with him a little upon certain occasions; but she had never at any time contemplated marrying him, nor indeed had the likelihood of his asking her to do so ever entered her mind. She had known, of course, that he admired her, but she had not speculated upon the probable result of his admiration; and now that she had to make him understand this, without seeming needlessly

brusque or unkind, the task appeared to her, in her inexperience, a hard one.

'I am so very sorry!' she murmured at length, looking down and nervously pulling to pieces a flower which she had fastened in her belt. 'I hope you will not be angry with me; but indeed it is impossible—quite impossible!'

Von Oberndorf saw a fragment of hope in Miss Howard's visible perturbation, and clutched at it eagerly.

- 'I have taken you by surprise,' he said; 'you have not had time to think—is it not so? You will not dismiss me at once—no! You will make reflection; and to-morrow, or next week, or when you please, you will give me your answer.'
- 'Oh, no!' exclaimed Linda, greatly alarmed at this proposition. 'Please do not think that that would make any difference. I am very sorry; but I could never marry you: there is no use in talking about it.'

Herr von Oberndorf heaved a sigh so prodigious that the seams of his tightly fitting uniform went near to cracking under the strain. 'Then it is all over with me!' he said. 'I want no more to live.'

The corners of Linda's mouth went down and her eyes grew large with commiseration. She was only eighteen, and she doubted not but that she saw before her a young man doomed to a blighted and joyless existence.

'I am very sorry,' she repeated, under her breath.

'I never had much hope,' said von Oberndorf, despondently. 'It was easy to see how it would end. Before long you will marry this Englishman—and you will not be happy mit him. He is too old for you; you cannot have sympathy together. Besides, he is fanatic for music; he will never care much for anybody or anything else. And it may be that, some day, when you are living alone in a dreary English castle, and your husband has left you to run over the country after a Cremona or a Straduarius, it will happen to you to regret the stupid German who loved every hair of your head more as all the violins in the world.'

Linda was not much touched by this melan-

choly forecast of her future; and the cool assumption that she was destined to become the wife of Mr. Mainwairing roused her to a less apologetic demeanour.

'I wish you would not say such things!' she exclaimed, impatiently. 'See what trouble you have made already by your foolish jealousy. If you only knew the truth, what a goose you would think yourself! Mr. Mainwairing and I are very good friends; but neither of us has ever thought of—of anything else.'

Herr von Oberndorf shook his head. He was not convinced; but he perceived that further words upon the subject would be offensive as well as useless; and he saw also that, whatever the state of the young lady's affections might be, his own chance of success was worth nothing. It only remained for him to pick up his cap from the floor and make a speedy and, if that could be, a graceful exit. This he accomplished fairly well.

'Adieu, Miss Howard,' he said. 'After this we shall not meet often again. Perhaps I have made a mistake about your friend; but, whether you marry him or another, I hope you will always be very happy. As for me, I have war to look forward to. It will be hard if I cannot find a Prussian bullet to settle my affair.' And so he took his departure, greatly to Linda's relief.

How, after much patient research, he succeeded in tracing the calumnious report in the Sächsischer Beobachter to M. Lepkine; how he actually carried out his nose-pulling threat upon the person of that imaginative gentleman, and received a bullet in his shoulder for his pains; how he subsequently took part in the battle of Königgrätz, where he covered himself with glory and honourable scars; and how he has more recently distinguished himself, fighting by the side of his former foes at St. Privat and elsewhere—all this cannot be related in the present narrative, which will concern itself no further with Herr von Oberndorf and his It may, however, be stated that his fortunes. early disappointment has not cast a permanent shadow over his life, and that he is now the husband of a plump and fresh-coloured little

Saxon dame, and the happy father of a rapidly increasing family.

Linda, on being once more left in solitude, threw herself back in a low easy-chair, closed her eyes, and indulged in what was to her a very unusual luxury, that of doing nothing. She did not feel up to work of any kind; and, indeed, a young lady who has just refused her first offer may be excused for being a trifle agitated and upset. It was not, however, this subject that occupied the first place in Linda's thoughts as she sat musing in her arm-chair, while the afternoon wore on and the patches of sunlight on the wall drew nearer to the ceiling. Her mind was much more taken up with Mr. Mainwairing than with Herr von Oberndorf. Would he come and see her, she wondered, as soon as he was convalescent? And, if so, how far would it become her to seem conscious of what had occurred since their last meeting? She felt instinctively that Mainwairing would prefer that the duel and its consequences should be entirely ignored; and no doubt this would be the pleasanter plan, if

only it were feasible. But how could she pass over without comment the interruption of his daily visits? And would it not seem heartless to abstain from commiserating him upon sufferings of which, after all, she was the sole cause? And, worst of all, would any return to the old footing of unrestricted intimacy be possible so long as each of them not only knew of the existence of that unfortunate paragraph in the Sächsischer Beobachter, but was aware that the other must also have seen or heard of it? After due reflection Linda came to the conclusion that, in the very probable event of Mr. Mainwairing volunteering no remark upon this or any other circumstance connected with his non-appearance, it would be best for her to let him know, in as few words as might be, that she had been told of what had taken place, to apologise for having introduced him to the pugnacious German, to treat the whole affair as an unlucky but palpable misunderstanding, and then to let the subject be put aside at once and for ever.

She had mentally rehearsed the scene seve-

ral times over, when Mr. Howard came in, hot and dusty, having returned from Dresden on foot. Linda had never had any secrets from her father. As soon as she had put a comfortable chair for him by the open window, and had got him a glass of beer with a lump of ice in it—which was his substitute for afternoon tea—she proceeded to unfold her tale.

- 'Herr von Oberndorf has been here,' she began.
- 'I thought I had told you that you were never to receive visitors in my absence,' said Mr. Howard, frowning.
- 'Yes, but he was in the room before I could prevent it,' said Linda, somewhat abashed. 'I could not well turn him out when he was once there, could I?'

And then she went on to relate all that had passed between her and the young officer, with-holding no single detail; for she had been brought up upon the principle that, next to disobedience, there can be no offence so heinous as that of concealment on the part of a daughter towards her parents.

Upon the conclusion of her recital Mr. Howard was so kind as to express himself satisfied with her conduct. His enquiries had convinced him that von Oberndorf, though quite unobjectionable as regarded birth and connections, would never be anything but a very poor match; and Linda, being exceptionally pretty, might, her father thought, aspire to a good · income as well as a good name. On the other hand, the young man had displayed a laudable interest in the game of écarté, together with a child-like ignorance of the rudimentary principles whereby money may be gained in pursuit of that pastime. Such characters are not to be met with every day; and it was, therefore, much to be regretted that events had been so far precipitated as to put an end to his evening visits to Blasewitz. But this Mr. Howard did not say. He contented himself with remarking that this kind of thing was a great nuisance, but he supposed it was unavoidable; and then went on to remark, carelessly-

'By the way, I saw Mainwairing this afternoon.'

'No! did you really?' cried Linda. 'We he looking ill? Had he seen the newspape Did he seem very cross about it all?'

'Oh, dear, no,' answered Mr. Howai 'Mainwairing is much too sensible a fellow bother himself over such rubbish as that. T best way to treat the thing is to laugh at it a forget it.'

Linda was hardly prepared for so philosphic a tone.

'I was afraid both you and he would very angry,' she said.

'Where's the good of being angry?' I turned Mr. Howard, pertinently. 'No m with a grain of sense in his head ever loses I temper with a confounded newspaper. Mai wairing was very much pleased at my looki him up,' he continued. 'We had a little ta together, and I put the matter before him in perfectly open and friendly way. "The wise thing you can do, my dear fellow," I said, "to get out of this as quickly as you can. you were to begin to visit us again every da as you have been doing of late, people wou

gossip; and gossip I can't and won't have." So he thanked me for my advice, and said he would go away as soon as the doctor would let him—very properly, I think.'

Linda's countenance fell a little. Mr. Mainwairing's readiness to depart struck her as more accommodating than complimentary.

- 'I suppose we shall see him before he goes?' she said.
- 'Well, no; I think not,' said Mr. Howard.
 'Under the circumstances, we both agreed that it would be wiser for him not to show himself again in Blasewitz for the present.'
- 'I am sorry for that,' observed Linda, with as much composure as she could muster. 'I should have liked to have said good-bye to him.'
- Mr. Howard had strolled out through the window, with his hands in his pockets, whist-ling out of tune, as his habit was. He looked back over his shoulder to reply—
- 'Oh, he will be back in the course of the summer. He asked my permission to return when the talk about this affair had blown over; and I saw no objection to his doing so. In the

meantime he wants us to take care of his violin. I should be very sorry indeed to think that we had seen the last of Mainwairing, and I quite look forward to having him here again. Taking him altogether, he really is an uncommonly good sort of fellow.'

From which remarks it may be inferred that Mr. Howard had not yet given up all hope of bringing about a match between his daughter and the gentleman in question.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KNAVISH TRICKS OF HERR VON BISMARCK.

The spring passed away, and with it went the greater part of the foreigners who had wintered in Dresden—Mrs. and Miss Tower among the rest. Before the lilacs and laburnums in Mr. Howard's garden had shed their blossoms the last of these birds of passage had taken wing, and the hotel-keepers set about cleaning and painting their establishments in anticipation of the influx of holiday tourists which might be expected later in the year.

They never came, those wished-for tourists, with their familiar grey suits, their puggarees, their bottle-green veils, their 'Murrays,' and their circular notes. The designs of an inexorable grim-visaged Prussian caused the tide of pleasure-seekers to be turned into other chan-

nels than the Elbe valley for that season, and the hotel-keepers had to make the best of a bad business. The summer of 1866 was a sad one for them as well as for the rest of their compatriots. When war was declared between Austria and Prussia there was a natural little outbreak of patriotic enthusiasm, and the honest Saxons, with a sigh over their doomed crops and vines, furbished up their weapons and prepared to do battle for hearth and home. 'Preussen oder Deutschland? Das ist jetzt die Rede!' cried the Beobachter, in a burst of indignant eloquence, and Saxony, from king to peasant, was for answering the question in such a decided manner as should prevent those insolent Berliners from ever bringing it forward again. The question, however, as we all know, would not be answered in the Austro-German fashion, and what popular excitement there had been in Dresden was soon replaced by silent resignation. The brave little Saxon army marched away southwards, and instead of returning in a week or two, accompanied by triumphant hosts of white-coated brethren on their way towards

Berlin, was supplanted by invaders in spiked helmets, who ate very heartily, paid very badly, and were not conspicuous for modesty of demeanour. This was no joke either to hotelkeepers or householders. What with the burden of supporting hungry soldiers, the bad news, or no news, from friends over the frontier in Bohemia, the presence of the conquerors, and the prospect of even worse things in the future, Dresden fell into great sorrow and heaviness. Then the wounded, Saxon and Prussian, began to arrive from the front, and brought conflicting reports with them. Who could tell what the next move might be? Suppose the Austrians were to gain a great victory and march upon Dresden? That, no doubt, would be cause for rejoicing, on public grounds; but, with the enemy lodged in his very house, the most patriotic of citizens may be excused for looking with a grave face upon the approach of his friends.

The English resident colony, already much diminished in numbers, began to pack up its trunks. One by one the foreign families made good their retreat, and the Bürgerwiese, the Grosse Garten, and the English Club knew them no more.

'Rats fly from a falling house,' remarked one conspicuous exception to the general rule, who chose to look upon the exodus of his compatriots with some contempt. 'As for me, I am not in the habit of running away. I have made my arrangements for passing the summer at Blasewitz, and at Blasewitz I shall remain. Let any one of them, Austrian or Prussian, lay a finger on me or my property, and they will find that it is no joke to meddle with an Englishman!'

It was generally felt that these sentiments, which were pretty loudly expressed, were at once creditable and courageous; and it would be ungenerous to assume that Mr. Howard would have held different language, or acted otherwise, if the state of his exchequer had been more flourishing. It shall not, therefore, be recorded of him that he remained at Blasewitz simply because he could not go away; and it is a fact that he subscribed three thalers

in money and a bundle of old shirts for the relief of the wounded, besides expressing verbally an immense amount of sympathy for both sides.

Impartiality, indeed, was a quality the virtue of which became, in those days, increasingly apparent; and Mr. Howard was not slow to perceive this, and to shape his conduct in accordance with circumstances. Thus, when a foolish Briton, who had made himself conspicuous in one of the Dresden restaurants by openly-avowed partisanship on the side of the allied forces, got into serious trouble thereby, was locked up for a couple of days, scolded by the representative of the United Kingdom, and finally hustled out of the country, Mr. Howard took occasion to say emphatically, in public, 'Serve him right!'

'England,' remarked this sagacious observer, 'is neutral in the present crisis. I am an Englishman; therefore I am neutral. I may have my own opinion as to the rights of the quarrel; I may have friends in the one army or in the other, or in both; but propriety for-

bids me to say anything more than that I sorry to see my friends at variance. As Englishman, and as a temporary resident Dresden, I am bound to show no leaning tows either side. And for that reason, my d Linda, I will thank you to stop playing Austrian national hymn, and to refrain fr throwing up your nose in the air when I meet a Prussian soldier.'

The truth is that Linda was less discr than her father, and having, for a variety reasons, all of which appeared to her excelle ranged herself upon the Austrian side, was no pains to disguise her predilections.

She, together with Lieschen, who natural shared her mistress's views, was troubled we no doubts as to the righteousness of the Sax cause and the iniquity of the Prussian. It argument was a very simple one, and was nobscured by any confusing question of political A man's property is sacred in the eyes of the law, and if his neighbour breaks in upon it, a helps himself to whatever he may find there, is a felon. Very well. Saxony belonged to the

Saxons: nobody could deny that. The Prussians had invaded Saxony, and were living upon the people. Therefore the Prussians were thieves and felons—and wore a hideous uniform, and took up the whole of the pavement to themselves into the bargain. Moreover, Linda did not know any of them personally.

Unfortunately, Mr. Howard did. His acquaintance, which was of a cosmopolitan character, included certain of the red-collared, helmeted gentry who then formed the garrison of Dresden, and he did not fail to seek these out and politely beg them to visit him at Blasewitz whenever their military duties left them free to do so. And, to the infinite disgust of Mr. Howard's household, the Prussian officers came. Linda ventured upon a respectful remonstrance, which was received with more good humour than she had expected, but which, of course, failed to produce any effect.

'My dear child,' Mr. Howard said, condescendingly, 'when you are my age you will have found out, if you are wise, that there are good people in all nations. I am very sorry for our friends the Saxons, but they are not the only inhabitants of the world, and I really can't undertake to cut everybody whom they may happen to be at war with. It is not the fault of these young men that they were born Prussians; and, for my part, I never ask where a man comes from, so long as he is a pleasant fellow.'

And no doubt Mr. Howard spoke sincerely; for when a man's value as a companion depends less upon his social qualities than upon his taste for moderate gambling and his imperfect knowledge of games of skill, it is a matter of secondary importance whether his name be von Oberndorf, or von Podewitz, or Schultze, or Müller.

Life, then, at Blasewitz ran on very much in its habitual groove, though echoes of battle came rolling from beyond the mountains, and the hospitals were choked with wounded and dying men, and figures clad in deep mourning began to creep about the streets. Empires may rise and kingdoms fall, and thousands die silently side by side between the rising and the

setting of the sun, but humanity at large must eat, work, and sleep as usual. Mr. Howard read of Nachod, and Trautenau, and Königgrätz as he munched his toast at breakfast; Linda practised her scales, and mended her father's socks, and regulated the household expenditure; and sometimes, in the evening, one or other of the Prussian officers would drop in and take a hand at écarté. The only change was in the uniform of the evening guests, and in the absence of one whose visits had formerly spread themselves over a larger portion of the day.

In those days it not unfrequently happened to Linda to find herself sighing over her solitude and regretting the blank created by Mainwairing's abrupt departure. It annoyed her to think that she missed him, because she had been a little offended by his unceremonious leavetaking, and she did not choose to admit, even to herself, that she could throw off the ties of a passing intimacy less easily than he. She said to herself that it was companionship in the abstract that she longed for-not the companionship of Mr. Mainwairing or of any other individual in particular. But that did not prevent her from being highly incensed when one of her father's Prussian friends, espying the violin which still lay in the corner where Mainwairing had left it, took it out of its case and drew the bow once or twice across its strings with no unpractised hand.

- 'Please don't make that noise,' she cried; 'you give me a headache.'
- 'What! You like not the violin?' said the Prussian, in surprise.
- 'Not unless it is properly played,' answered Linda, snappishly. And the next time the gallant officer presented himself at Blasewitz he noticed that the instrument had been removed. It was Linda who had carried it upstairs and locked it away in one of the empty rooms, remarking casually, as she did so, that the drawing-room was very damp, and that she had heard that violins were easily injured.

This little episode occurred about the time when hostilities had been suspended, and when Messrs. Bismarck, Benedetti, and other clever people were busy trying to get the better of one another at Nikolsburg. Very likely Linda, as she carefully deposited the violin in a drawer, may have thought it possible that its owner would ere long be returning to claim his property. The difficulty of travelling in a country occupied by hostile armies had been sufficient to account for his non-arrival up to that time; but, now that roads and railways were about to be thrown open once more to the public, Mainwairing's return might be looked for any day.

In due course came the conclusion of peace, the departure of the invaders, the return of the Saxons, and the reappearance of a few members of the English colony. But Mainwairing made no sign. Then it became tolerably clear that he did not intend to come back at all. Whereat Linda was vexed and disappointed, and angry with herself for being disappointed.

'Don't you think it is rather rude of Mr. Mainwairing never to have written to us?' she asked her father at last.

Mr. Howard grimaced, shrugged his shoulders, and observed that Mainwairing had always

been an odd sort of fellow. 'Only a secc son, after all,' he added, following the train his own thoughts rather too quickly for I daughter's perceptions.

'Are second sons ruder than elder sons asked Linda. 'It seems to me that nearly Englishmen are rude.'

And after that day she made no further 1 ference to Mr. Mainwairing.

If, however, she had had any means knowing the mental state of the truant it probable that she would have judged him wi less severity. Mainwairing had left Dresden few days after his interview with Mr. Howar doubting not but that, in so doing, he w acting as became a prudent and sensible ma Being well aware that he was in some dang of falling in love with Linda—if, indeed, I had not already, to some extent, committe that folly—and having likewise discerned M Howard's schemes for his entanglement, he w inclined to take some credit to himself, not on for his self-denial in quitting the perilous neig bourhood, but also for the adroitness with whice

he had contrived so to time his departure as that it should seem the natural outcome of events beyond his control. But this comfortable sense of self-approval turned out more shortlived than he had anticipated, and it was not long before he realised that he was to prove no exception to the ancient rule of Cælum, non animum.

At Prague, which was his first halting-place, he simply thought of nothing but Linda all day long. He had no acquaintances in the place, and his disabled arm deprived him of his favourite occupation. So he made haste to visit the crumbling palaces of the old city on the Moldau, to buy, as in duty bound, some specimens of Bohemian glass, and to take his But neither did Vienna ticket for Vienna. prove a success. Mainwairing found himself perpetually drawing unfavourable comparisons between the Austrian ladies whose salons he was privileged to enter and Linda. Go where he might, he was persistently haunted by memories of her. The streets, as he wandered through them in his dreamy way, seemed thronged by Lindas; the trees in the Prater whispered her name; the very bands in the Volksgarten joined in the conspiracy, and were for ever playing the airs which she preferred. At the end of three weeks it was evident that this would never do. Oblivion, thought Mainwairing, must be sought at some safer distance from Dresden, or he would find himself, one fine morning or another, at Blasewitz, and at Linda's feet, before he knew what he was about. Then it was that he conceived the brilliant idea of going down the Danube to Constantinople. This, at least, would take him over new ground; and if there was anything in the sight of a Turk to remind him of Miss Howard his case must be a desperate one indeed.

To Constantinople he accordingly went; and it is perhaps needless to say that mosques and minarets, glimpses of glittering sea and solemn cypresses standing out against a sky of melting blue produced no beneficial change in the mind of the wanderer. Sitting disconsolately, one stifling evening, at the window of Missirie's hotel, at Pera, while the howling of vagrant

dogs and a cunningly blended mixture of noisome odours rose to him from the street beneath, he turned at bay at last and boldly faced his scruples. He put the case before himself with admirable lucidity. As a bachelor he was comfortably off: as a married man he would be poor. In the event of his marrying Linda he would probably find himself compelled to reside abroad, which, although no great hardship to a man of his tastes, when voluntarily incurred, would, as he was well aware, present itself in a wholly different light if adopted from necessity. Then, of course, his family would strongly disapprove of the match. Lastly, he would have to put up with Mr. Howard as a father-in-law, and that was the greatest bugbear of all. But, looking at the other side of the question, he reflected that, if a man's love be only true and strong enough, such considerations as these ought not to have any weight with him. A love which hesitates at sacrifices is no love at all, and a love which is real and permanent must needs triumph over all obstacles of a pecuniary and conventional character. Mainwairing began to believe that attachment for Linda was of this kind. It is been of slow growth; he had fought agains from the outset; and it was, therefore, the mosurely genuine. He got up, opened the do and called his servant.

'Davis,' said he, 'pack up my things. I going back to Dresden.'

'Yes, sir,' answered the man. 'Beg yo pardon, sir, but which way did you me to go?'

'Which way? Oh, I don't know. A way. The shortest way, I suppose.'

Mainwairing generally left the choice routes to Davis, who had had consideral experience of European travel, and was c verer than his master at unravelling the meteries of Bradshaw. The man considered for minute.

'I suppose you wouldn't like to work rou by Warsaw and Frankfort-on-the-Hoder, sir he said at length. 'Very tejious railway journesir.'

^{&#}x27;Certainly not,' said Mainwairing. .

- 'Then I don't see 'ow we're to manage it, sir, without we take the Haustrian Lloyd's steamer to Hathens, and the Messageries on to Marseilles, and so git round by way of Cologne and Berlin.'
- 'My good Davis, what are you talking about? I don't want to go round the world; I want to go to Dresden, I tell you. We had better go back by the way we came.'
- 'Can't do that, sir. Fighting agoing on in Bohemia between the Haustrians and Prooshians, if you remember, sir. Likewise in the North of Hitaly; so it wouldn't be no use to make for Venice, sir.'
- 'Dear me, yes! I never thought of that,' muttered Mainwairing, relapsing into a reverie.

He woke up again after a few minutes and remarked-

- 'This is very inconvenient, Davis.'
- 'Yes, sir.'
- 'Perhaps I had better wait till this war is over?'
 - 'Yes, sir.'
 - 'It almost looks,' continued Mainwairing,

musingly—'it really almost looks like a sperinterposition of Providence.'

'It does, sir.'

'I wish, Davis, you would get out of titresome habit of agreeing with everything say. Have you the least idea of what you alluding to when you speak of a special int position of Providence?'

Davis smiled, and then put his hand beft his mouth and coughed slightly.

'Of course you haven't,' resumed his mast accepting this as an admission of ignorance 'What I meant was that Providence seems have determined upon the annihilation of the Austrian Empire. Germany and Italy, Dav have what you might call a natural and physic destiny to accomplish. Sooner or later the must become united kingdoms; and Austrican only delay this, not prevent it. Therefor I say that Providence appears to be favouring the Prussians, with a view, no doubt, to ave future bloodshed. But to return to my plan We must go away somewhere, Davis.'

'Where would you wish to go, sir?'

'Well, that I will leave to you, Davis. will go anywhere, except to England: I don't care about going back to England just yet. There's the Crimea, you know, and Greece, and lots of other places. Think it over during the night, Davis, and let me know in the morning what you think will do best.'

Thus it came about that, on the very morning on which Linda uttered her comprehensive judgment upon the manners of Englishmen in general, Mainwairing was in the Crimea, preparing, in good earnest this time, to set out on his journey to Dresden. The additional breathing space accorded to him, as he had so piously assumed, by the care of a watchful Providence. had served rather to strengthen than to weaken his purpose; and the victory of love over prudence and selfishness was now complete. With a light heart and a mind relieved from care. Mainwairing shook himself clear of the last clinging remnant of his indecision, and exclaiming 'Jacta est alea!' set his face northwards. And, in due course of time, he alighted, on a sultry afternoon, at the door of his old quarters,

the Hôtel Bellevue, and, having refreshed himself with a bath, started on foot for Blasewitz.

The walk was long, hot, and dusty; but Mainwairing scarcely noticed these inconveniences. His head was full of beatific visions; he seemed as if walking on air, and did not know that he was striding along at a pace which caused the passers-by to turn round and look after him. He would have liked to shake them all by the hand, those honest, stolid peasants, who slouched by with a half-surly 'Guten He was so glad to see the rich fields Abend!' again, and the swelling hills beyond the Elbe, and the slow, patient oxen drawing their creaking carts, that he almost fancied that the land smiled back a welcome to him and wished him good luck on his errand. Good luck!—had he not deserved good luck? 'I have had a fight with Self and the Devil, and I have conquered,' thought Mainwairing. And I daresay he felt a little proud of the feat.

Arriving at Mr. Howard's house in this happy and hopeful frame of mind, he paused, for a moment, before ringing the bell. The

outer door stood open, and he could see through the doorway the cool, dark entrance-hall, with its polished floor, its whitewashed walls, and its old oak chairs. An indistinct chatter of highpitched German voices came from the distant regions of the kitchen; but here there was silence unbroken, save for the hoarse ticking of an old-fashioned clock. Mainwairing, who had half expected to be greeted by the well-known sound of the piano, began to fear that the mistress of the house was absent. But now came the rustle of a woman's dress upon the stairs, and presently Linda herself ran down and stood before him.

She wore a black dress; and a ray of sunlight, streaming through a window above her, fell upon her golden-brown hair. As she paused on the lowest step, one hand lightly resting upon the banister, the white wall behind her throwing out her dark figure, and her lovely face illuminated with joy and surprise, Mainwairing felt a thrill of momentary enthusiasm at the sight of her mere physical beauty, and, if he had followed his impulse,

would have fallen at her feet there and then and declared his love without more ado.

Of course he did nothing so preposterous. Conventionality seldom permits us to speak out the actual thoughts that are passing in our minds, and even forbids us to remain silent at times when silence seems as good as or better than speech. Mainwairing took off his hat and said, quite calmly, 'How do you do, Miss Howard?' and Linda said what is usual and correct in reply.

And so presently they were in the old drawing-room together once more; and Mainwairing, becoming conscious that he was staring Miss Howard out of countenance, allowed his eyes to roam over the room, which, somehow or other, looked a little strangely to him. The sofas and chairs were disposed stifly against the walls; Linda's work-table had vanished, as had also a number of small ornaments with which she had done her best to beautify the unpretending salon. On the other hand, a few garish chromo-lithographs, some hideous vases, empty of flowers, and a couple of plaster-of-Paris sta-

tuettes had been brought forth from the hidingplace in which they had lain since the commencement of Mr. Howard's tenancy, and now occupied their legitimate posts of honour. Strangest of all, there was an empty space where the piano—a hired one—had used to stand. Astonished, and somewhat dismayed at these portents, Mainwairing had opened his mouth to ask their meaning, when Linda spoke.

- 'So you have come at last,' she said. 'You promised you would come to say good-bye.'
- 'Yes,' he answered, 'I have come: but not to say good-bye, I hope.'

Linda shook her head with a gravity the effect of which was somewhat counteracted by the smile which played about her lips.

- 'I am afraid we shall have to bid one another good-bye this afternoon,' she said. 'Do you know that, if you had come a day later, you would not have had even that melancholy satisfaction? We start for England to-morrow.'
- ' What!' exclaimed Mainwairing. Here was a contingency which had never formed part of his speculations as to the future.

Linda was not altogether displeased at his consternation. She repeated her announcement, adding, rather unkindly—

'We had quite given up all expectation of seeing you here again. Where have you been all this long time?'

'In all sorts of abominable places,' answered Mainwairing, ruefully. 'Constantinople—Sebastopol—I don't know where. I should have been here long ago if it hadn't been for Bismarck. It was no fault of mine that I couldn't get from Vienna to Dresden without going round by the North Pole. But this is rather sudden, isn't it?—your going to England, I mean. Mr. Howard told me you would certainly be here all the summer.'

'That was what we intended,' said Linda; but—something very odd has happened. They say that if you only wish for a thing strongly enough you are sure to get it, sooner or later; but I have wished for money so long and so earnestly that one would have thought, if it was coming at all, it would have come sooner. But it has come now.'

She paused, looking before her with an odd, far-away gaze, a joyous smile upon her lips, as though she saw some distant pleasant sight. She remained so long silent that at last Mainwairing, to rouse her, said 'Yes?'

'Yes, it has come now. Did you ever hear me speak of my Uncle Thomas? No, of course you never did. I did not know him myself, and papa unfortunately had a quarrel with him years ago—about some money matters, I believe. I don't think he can have been very nice. Papa had not seen him for I don't know how long, and did not correspond with him. Certainly the last thing we thought of was that we should profit in any way by his death, particularly as he had an only son to whom he was devoted. But it seems that his son was killed last winter, out hunting, and the old man never recovered it. He died about a month ago, and he has left all his money to me.'

'To you!' exclaimed Mainwairing.

A momentary cloud passed over the brightness of Linda's face.

'Yes,' she said, 'he has left it to me. I

wish he had made papa his heir; it would have been so very much better in every way; but I suppose he must have borne malice because of that old quarrel. After all, it comes to very much the same thing, doesn't it?'

- 'Well—to a certain extent, perhaps. Was your uncle a very rich man?'
- 'Enormously. So rich that I can hardly realise what a change it will make to us. Can you believe that I have got more than 350,000l. all of my own, besides a house in London, and carriages, and plate, and I don't know what else?'

Mainwairing said it was a very large sum. He would have given a good deal to have been able to look pleased, and to congratulate Miss Howard heartily upon her good fortune; but, for the moment, his power of self-command was unequal to the emergency. The shock was too sudden, the reversal of their respective positions too complete for him to address Linda with such words of commonplace friendliness as the occasion appeared to call for. He had gone out to Blasewitz that day with the firm intention, indeed, of doing his best to win the heart of this

penniless and obscure girl, but with a perfect consciousness of the sacrifice he was making in so doing, and not without a trifling sense of his magnanimity in thus casting worldly considerations to the winds; and now, behold! by this cruel freak of fortune the beggar-maid was transformed into an heiress of the first magnitude, and, according to generally received ideas, her marriage with the second son of a country baronet would be a mere throwing of herself away. Was ever a man placed in a more unexpectedly humiliating position! Under such circumstances any immediate declaration of love was obviously out of the question. Nay, must it not be for ever out of the question? His love was disinterested enough, but would anybody believe it to be so who knew that he had refrained from paying his addresses to Miss Howard during nearly six months of constant intercourse, and had only come forward after her acquisition of this astounding windfall? Would Linda herself believe it to be so? Heiresses soon learn to be sceptical. Chewing the cud of these bitter reflections, Mainwairing held his

peace and kept his eyes fixed upon the ground. Linda, not unnaturally, misconstrued his silence, which she interpreted into a tacit reproof.

- 'I know you don't care about money,' she said, rather petulantly. 'Perhaps you would, though, if you knew what it was to be without it. You look as if you thought me very avaricious; but I am not—at least I don't think so It is not so much that I want carriages and dresses and jewellery, and all the other things that money brings. as that I do so hate the misery of being poor. I don't pretend that I shall not like having plenty of money to spend; why should I? What is the harm of enjoying good things when they come in one's way?'
- 'What, indeed?' said Mainwairing. 'Everybody likes to be rich; and quite right too. I don't in the least wonder at your being glad; and I am glad myself, for your sake, though I have personal and selfish reasons for regretting that your uncle could not have made it convenient to die a few months later. The fact is that, when I arrived in Dresden to-day, I was counting upon passing the remainder of the

summer very pleasantly. I thought you would kindly allow me to come and play the fiddle occasionally, as I used to do, and I had visions of hot afternoons spent with you in the shade of the garden, and cool evenings on the river, and a good many other delightful dreams—all of which have now evaporated. So that I am feeling just a little bit disappointed.'

- 'It is tiresome,' acquiesced Linda, musingly.
 'I should so have enjoyed it all! Do you know that I have been literally dying of loneliness since you went away? Why did you not come back sooner?'
- 'I wish to goodness I had!' thought Mainwairing to himself. Then he said aloud—
- 'I thought I had better make myself scarce for a time. Of course you heard all about my duel with your peppery young friend, von Oberndorf, and the lesson he was so kind as to give me?'
- 'Oh, yes,' said Linda, reddening slightly, but speaking without other sign of emotion; 'I heard of that, and I saw the account of it in the newspaper too; but you need not have

stayed away so long on that account; it has all been forgotten long ago; the war has put everything else out of remembrance. But I daresay you have been better amused where you have been than you would have been here.'

'No, indeed I have not. On the contrary, I have been bored to death. The only thing that has consoled me has been the prospect of ultimately getting back here. You don't know how I have looked forward to seeing this dear old room again, and you sitting at your piano. But the piano has gone already, and you are going to-morrow; so there is an end of all my dreams.'

'Oh, but you will come to England too?' said Linda, cheerfully.

'Shall I? I don't know. There is nothing particular to take me there, except that I want some clothes; and I can easily write to my tailor to send me them. And, supposing I did go home, I should never get you to play my accompaniments for me again. No, that day is passed. By this time next year you will most likely cut me if you meet me in the street.'

- 'What do you mean?' cried Linda, indignantly. 'You can't really think I should do such a thing as that. It is not kind of you to speak in that way.'
- 'Well, perhaps you would not actually cut me,' said Mainwairing, 'because you have been brought up abroad, and it will take you some time to acquire the habits of English society; but, for all that, you will not be disposed to give up an afternoon to hearing me play the fiddle. You won't have the time, in fact.'
- 'Why not?' said Linda. 'I think I shall have more time to myself than I have now, because I shall not have the housekeeping to attend to—and, oh, what a blessing that will be!—but, whether I am busy or not, I shall always find time to see my friends.'
- 'Yes; but perhaps I shall not be one of your friends then. Ah, you don't know yet what the life of an heiress in London is, nor what an astonishing number of friends she has to attend to. If I were there I should only be one of a crowd, and I daresay not the most favoured one. I could tell you exactly what

your life will be. You will have plenty of excitement, no end of balls and dinners and concerts and afternoon teas—the usual weary old round—and probably you will delight in it all at first. You will get sick of it in the end like everybody else; but by that time you will have become so accustomed to it that you could not give it up if you wished. On the whole, I can't congratulate you. You have got too much of a good thing, you see: with a quarter of your present fortune you might have been happy enough. I can't help fancying that the time will come when you will wish yourself back in Blasewitz, in peace and quietness.'

- 'I don't think I shall,' said Linda, gravely.
 'It is quiet enough here, certainly; but there is not much peace, in Blasewitz or anywhere else, for people who are perpetually tormented by visions of unpaid bills. I don't think, either, that I shall give up old friends for new ones, as you seem to think I shall.'
- 'H'm! well, perhaps not. But we are the slaves of circumstances, all of us. What is sadly evident to me is that you and I can never

be as pleasantly intimate in London as we have been here.'

'If you are so sure of that, I suppose it must be so,' answered Linda, coldly. She was hurt at the spirit in which Mainwairing had received her news. Why must he needs prophesy evil things to her? If he had been a woman she would have been inclined to suspect him of jealousy.

There was an interval of silence, during which Linda made a show of occupying herself with a piece of needlework, while Mainwairing traced invisible designs with his stick upon the well-worn carpet. Then he rose, and said—

'I suppose I may as well go now. I hate affecting farewells. Let us say good-bye as quickly as possible, and get the thing over.'

The words were spoken irritably and almost rudely; but, accompanying their apparent roughness, was a certain look in the speaker's eyes which Linda immediately detected, and in some sort understood. She thought he was really sorry to part with her, and with this belief her momentary vexation passed away.

'You have never asked about your violin,' she said. 'I have it, all safe, upstairs. Won't you let me hear you play once before you go?'

'I am out of practice,' said Mainwairing.
'Besides, you have no piano to accompany me upon.'

'So much the better. I want to hear you, not to play with you.'

Mainwairing smiled, for the request touched him in his most vulnerable point; nor was much pressing required to induce him to accede to it. Linda ran upstairs, and returned in a moment, bearing in her arms the precious violin. Mainwairing took it from her, with a word of thanks, and, after screwing up the strings and tuning them as best he could, broke out into the well-known pathetic air, 'Jours de mon Enfance,' from the *Pré aux Clercs*.

Then how he made that violin sing and sob and wail! What eloquence, undreamt of by the talented composer of the *Pré aux Clercs*, he drew from the simple melody! What unspeakable things he made the plaintive notes whisper! The tongue, as everybody knows, is

not the sole means of expression accorded to us There is a language of the eyes as unmistakable (under favourable circumstances, bien entendu) and infinitely more compendious than audible utterances; there is a language of gesture too, and a language of music, expressible by means of strings, or of wood and catgut, as the case may be, which is not hard to read. Mainwairing's tongue was tied by honourable scruples; but, for some reason or other. which it is needless here to analyse, he held himself free to say what he pleased through the voice of his beloved instrument. The rushing bow, the nimble fingers, the trembling, vibrating strings, did they not all combine and blend together to tell, as plainly as could be, the story which the brain that set them all in motion declined to commit to the less delicate medium of articulate speech? Did they not whisper of love, and moan of despair, and sigh Farewell as clearly as ever yet man spoke?

But language of this kind can only be read aright by such as are in entire sympathy with him who makes use thereof. It is a mere waste

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of time to send a despatch in cypher to a man who has not got the key to it. Linda, seeing much more cause for jubilation than regret in the surrounding circumstances, could not fall in with Mainwairing's mood, nor understand the melancholy and—if the truth must be told somewhat lackadaisical expression which had overspread his features. At the bottom of her heart she thought he was making a great fuss about a small matter. It was comprehensible, and even flattering, that he should mourn over the break-up of the Blasewitz establishment; but there was a house in London where, in spite of all his cynical doubts, he would always be welcomed; and, in short, Linda had no conception that she was listening to what was intended for an eternal adieu. As a musician, though, she could not fail to be struck by Mainwairing's splendid mastery over his instrument.

'How could you say you were out of practice?' she cried, when at length he let the violin slip down from his shoulder to his knees.
'You are improved—immensely improved. I never heard you play so well before.'

'If I played as well as Amphion or Orpheus what good would it be to me?' he returned, rather enigmatically. 'The days of miracles are past.'

Then he returned the violin to its case, said he would send for it in the morning, and, a few minutes later, found himself walking away towards Dresden in the warm, scented air of the evening. He would have been puzzled to say how he got out of the house or what had been the manner of his leave-taking. The one idea in his mind had been to get the wrench over as speedily as possible; for, though he believed something had been said about meeting again soon, and though Linda had given him a scrap of paper with her London address-250 Lancaster Gate-written upon it, he was well aware that he should never present himself at the door of that mansion, and that it would be best for his peace of mind that he should see Miss Howard no more. It seemed to him that her riches placed far more insurmountable obstacles between them than her poverty could ever have done. And as he plodded wearily along

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through the gloaming he fell to apostrophising himself with vituperative epithets.

'Ass! idiot! beast!' he exclaimed, cutting savagely with his stick at the humble little flowers that grew by the wayside. 'You knew you loved her long ago; but because you saw that the old fellow wanted to catch you, and because, forsooth, she was not a brilliant match, you chose to run away. Now you have lost her—and serve you right! She seemed glad to see me too. I wonder—but what's the use of wondering? She is as much out of my reach now as if she were married already. She will be married, I expect, before a year is over. I give her about six months to forget my existence; and I—I shall never forget her as long as I live. Lord, what a donkey I am!'

Picturing to himself the scenes of gaiety and excitement into which Linda's altered fortune must, thenceforth, of necessity lead her, he asked himself ruefully how long an heiress, and a beautiful heiress withal, could remain unspoiled by contact with the world. Seeing, in his mind's eye, a prophetic vision of Linda, magnificently dressed, surrounded by male admirers, and

courted by female toadies, the words of a certain melancholy Adieu rose in his memory; and as there was nobody in sight, he solaced himself by repeating them aloud. He was trolling out—

Adieu! tu vas faire un beau rêve, Et t'enivrer d'un plaisir dangereux; Sur ton chemin l'étoile qui se lève Longtemps encore éblouira tes yeux.

Un jour tu sentiras peut-être Le prix d'un cœur qui nous comprend, Le bien qu'on trouve à le connaître, Et ce qu'on souffre en le perdant.

Mainwairing, I say, was spouting these sentimental stanzas ore rotundo, when, turning a corner, he found himself suddenly face to face with an elderly gentleman, who, having had a considerable amount of business to transact in Dresden that day, at his banker's and elsewhere, was now hurrying home to Blasewitz to dinner, with his pockets full of money and his heart full of contentment.

'God bless my soul, Mainwairing! is that you?' cried the elderly gentleman. 'Where the deuce have you sprung from?'

In the midst of all his sorrow Mainwairing

could not help feeling some sense of amusement and satisfaction as he noticed the far from cordial tone of Mr. Howard's greeting. 'Oho! my old friend,' thought he; 'times are changed, are they? I was a big enough fish last spring; but now that we have got 350,000l. at the end of our line, we ought to catch something heavier, eh?'

- 'Been to my place?' inquired Mr. Howard, carelessly, but not without perceptible uneasiness.
- 'I have,' answered Mainwairing, composedly, quite understanding what was passing in the anxious parent's mind. 'I only returned this afternoon, and I went at once to call upon Miss Howard. I am very glad I did so, as it has given me the opportunity of having a nice long chat with her.'
- 'Oh!' said Mr. Howard, looking at him with keen grey eyes. 'I suppose she has told you, then, that we are off the first thing tomorrow morning?'
- 'Yes. By-the-by, I must congratulate you upon your legacy.'

- 'Thank you, Mainwairing, thank you. My poor brother's money will be a help to us, no doubt; but wealth brings responsibilities with it—heavy responsibilities. Are you, too, on your way to England?'
- 'I think not,' said Mainwairing. 'But really I don't know; I have no plans.'
- 'That's the way to enjoy life!' said Mr. Howard, manifestly comforted by this announcement. 'No plans—no bother—no troublesome duties! Between you and me, Mainwairing,' he continued, with a lapse into something of his old confidential manner, 'I don't feel at all sure that we shall be any the happier for this money coming in. I shall be obliged now to live at home; and really I have got so accustomed to foreign life that I fancy I shall find going back to English society very slow work. Well, well! we mustn't look a gift horse in the mouth. I hope I shall see you at my house in London some day.'
- 'Thanks,' said Mainwairing. 'Miss Howard was kind enough to give me her address.'
 - 'Oh!' said Mr. Howard again, rather

shortly. 'Well, any time you like to look us up, you know, Mainwairing—any time—always delighted to see you! I won't keep you standing any longer now. Good night.'

Mainwairing looked after the receding figure of his affable friend with an amused twinkle in his eyes. 'My house in London!' he muttered. 'Poor little Linda! I hope, for her sake, that her money is carefully secured to her.'

Then he returned to the Hôtel Bellevue sadly enough, and spent the evening in wondering what he should do next.

By the time he had got to the end of his fourth cigar he had made up his mind to go to Canada; for his recent experience had not sufficed wholly to destroy his faith in the efficacy of change of scene. 'Canada will, at any rate, be a new country to me,' he thought; 'and I shall get plenty of fishing and shooting there—which will be something. But, oh, ye gods! to think that, if the Austrians and Prussians had put off their quarrel for a month or two, I might have come straight back here from Constantinople and made it all right! I have

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lost my happiness and peace of mind, and I am driven out of Europe uniquely through the knavish tricks of Herr von Bismarck—whom may Heaven confound!'

CHAPTER X.

LINDA ENTERS UPON HER INHERITANCE.

'LINDA, my dear girl, do exercise a little self-command,' said Mr. Howard. 'It is quite natural that these good people should be sorry that we are going. They lose an easy place, liberal wages, and an indulgent master; and of course they show their grief in their unrestrained, vulgar way; but really it isn't at all the thing for a lady to burst into tears at parting with a couple of servants.'

Linda obediently dried her eyes and endeavoured to gulp down the lump that would keep rising in her throat. She was sitting in the carriage which had come to convey her to the station; the luggage had been piled upon the roof and at the back of the vehicle; her father was preparing to take his place at her side,

and she was about to see the last of the old house which had been her home for so many Her life there had not-latterly at least—been so cheerful that she need have grieved much over leaving it; but who ever yet quitted a roof which had become familiar to him-did it but cover a Dotheboys Hall or an official residence (and we know, from the repeated public assurances of our rulers, how willingly the tenancy of the latter class of dwelling-houses is always resigned)—without a passing pang of regret? It was not so much to Herr Eichmann's house that Linda was so sorry to bid adieu as to the thousand memories which seemed, at this last moment, to cling about it and identify themselves with it, so that now, for the first time, the girl recognised, with a sort of shock, the absolute and final breaking off from old associations which she was about to accomplish. As to what her future manner of life was likely to be she could form little more than the vaguest surmise; but she knew, at least, that it must differ very widely from that which she was upon the eve of casting off.

With a new and uncertain career opening before her, with all present duties, habits, and pleasures dropping into the background, and with Lieschen and Christine boohooing on the doorstep in the most heartrending manner, it was scarcely surprising that she should break down, and display a little of the emotion which her father had denounced as unworthy of a lady.

Linda's distress did not, however, last long. She was herself again before the railway station was reached; and Mr. Howard had no further occasion for complaint during the long journey to London.

What, indeed, could have been more delightful than that journey to a young lady born and bred in penury, but by nature appreciative of small comforts? To travel in a coupé specially reserved; to lodge in the best rooms of the best hotels; to order dinner without any uncomfortable misgivings as to the length of to-morrow's bill; to drive to and from the station in a well-cushioned carriage, instead of in the jingling omnibus provided for the convey-

ance of the humbler order of travellers—all these things may have little value in the eyes of those who habitually enjoy them; but to Linda, who had not as yet learnt to regard such luxuries as matters of course, they were a source of pure and unmixed pleasure. There was an intoxication in this suddenly-acquired command over gold, a delirious glee in the wicked extravagance of drinking champagne at dinner every night, which, for the time, went near to turning Linda's head.

Mr. Howard, too, exhibited at this time an amount of amiability quite without a parallel in his daughter's recollection. At Hanover, which was their first halting-place, he presented her with a very handsome carved ivory fan before taking her to the Opera in the evening. At Cologne he took a fancy to a heavy gold bracelet which caught his eye in a jeweller's window and bought it for his beloved child, who, as he fondly said, need now no longer be without the trinkets that women like. And at Brussels he went out to the flower-market, the first thing in the morning, and returned with a

huge bunch of fresh, wet roses, which he handed to Linda when she took her place at the breakfast-table.

'Not a valuable present, my dear,' said he, with touching simplicity; 'but I remembered that you were fond of roses, and I thought that, by getting up a little earlier than usual, I might secure you a few before they were spoilt by the heat.'

This modest offering affected Linda far more than the bracelet or the fan had done. It was only the knowledge of her father's dislike to such exhibitions that kept her from bursting into tears of love and gratitude as she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him, thanking him fervently for his goodness.

'Oh, papa, how nice it is to be rich!' she cried.

Mr. Howard looked a little disconcerted. I hope you don't imagine that I am more indulgent to you than I used to be because you are an heiress now, my dear?' he said.

It was the first time that any allusion had been made by him to the fact that Linda was

the sole inheritress of her uncle's wealth, and the girl felt inexpressibly pained and humiliated by it.

'Oh, papa!' she exclaimed, 'how could you think I could be such a wretch? As if you had not always been as kind as anyone could be! Only, now that you are rich and have not little things to bother you, of course you have more time to think of me. As for the money, what does it matter whether it is yours or mine? Why, you have a right to everything that belongs to me, haven't you?'

'Not exactly, my dear,' answered Mr. Howard—'no legal right, at least. Some people might think there was a—what shall I say?—a sort of moral obligation; but I should be the last man in the world to insist upon that. My only feeling in the matter is that, taking into consideration your youth and inexperience, it might be as well that I should help you in the management of your inheritance—perhaps receive the interest of your money for you, or something of that kind. But these are mere business details which it will be best for me to

discuss with Mr. Deane. We need not worrv about them just now.'

Mr. Deane, the senior partner of a highly respectable firm of solicitors, had been a friend of the late Mr. Thomas Howard, and was one of the executors to his will. It was Mr. Deane who had written to apprise Linda of her fortune, who had suggested the propriety of her immediate presence in her native land, and who had thoughtfully forwarded the necessary funds for the journey. Linda declared her willingness to leave the arrangement of her affairs in the hands of this competent person and of her father; and so the subject dropped.

A few days later, the young heiress, standing upon the crowded deck of a Channel steamer, caught her first glimpse of the white cliffs of England rising above the sultry mists of a summer afternoon, and Dover Castle, with the British flag floating above it. Her first impression on landing was one of patriotic pride. The sober celerity with which the operation of transferring the passengers and luggage from the boat to the train was accomplished, the absence

of shouting and flurry, and the liberty of movement accorded to the travellers, made her feel that she was in a free and self-respecting country, where love of order was sufficiently innate to render vexatious restrictions and regulations superfluous. The railway-carriages, to be sure, were not as luxurious as might have been expected; but the speed and smoothness with which the train travelled more than made up for this deficiency; and the calm, rich beauty of the Kentish landscape filled Linda with delight and surprise. Mr. Howard pointed out the various objects of interest as they sped onwards

'All this is So-and-so's property,' he said, with a circular sweep of his arm. 'I remember him very well at Oxford; and a very good fellow he was. He and I were sworn allies at one time. I shall introduce you to him, one of these days, Linda.'

Linda thought how fortunate it was that papa had so many friends in England, and how pleasant it would be to spend a week or so at Lord So-and-so's place. She had heard a great deal about English country houses, and was anxious to see for herself whether the grandeur of these establishments had been overrated. That she would soon have an opportunity of doing so she did not for a moment doubt; for her father had always given her to understand that nothing but the unfortunate accident of his poverty had prevented him from mixing in the most aristocratic circles; and, now that this barrier was removed, she confidently expected that he would resume his legitimate place in society.

The hop-gardens and the green meadows, the distant blue hills and the sober red-brick farmhouses seemed to welcome the wanderers home; and Linda marvelled at the insensibility of those who had told her that England was not a picturesque country. She had seen many foreign lands, but none that appeared to her more satisfying to the eye than this.

London, however, proved a terrible disappointment. For a certain amount of smoke and blackness Linda had been prepared; but her expectations fell very far short of the reality.

When the train glided under a yellowish foggy canopy, which turned the setting sun into a mere dim circle; when, to right and left, row after row of dirty red houses stretched out to meet the narrowed horizon, their monotony broken only by some occasional church-spire of inconceivable hideousness; when, directly beneath the viaduct along which the train ran, the poverty-stricken streets of Bermondsey displayed themselves in all their meanness, squalor, and misery, Linda fairly shuddered in dismay, and, turning to her father, asked whether this could indeed be London.

- 'Yes, this is London,' answered Mr. Howard, smiling. 'It isn't much to look at, when the wind is in the east; but it's not a bad place to live in.'
- 'I don't think I could ever bear to live in such a town as this,' said Linda, in an awestruck undertone. 'It is too horribly ugly!'

The contrast between the homely cheeriness of the country which she had just left and the utter gloom of the huge and grimy city which she was entering impressed her forcibly, and struck her with a vague foreboding. Nor was this feeling lessened when it was discovered, on arrival at the terminus, that neither carriage nor servant was in waiting to receive the travellers. Mr. Howard was a good deal put out by this omission.

'I wrote to Mr. Deane that we should arrive this evening,' he said, as he followed his daughter into a four-wheeled cab. 'I can't understand why he has not sent somebody to meet us.'

'I hope they expect us,' said Linda, despondently.

'Expect us? Of course they do. It was arranged that all your uncle's servants should remain in their places till we returned; and it was their business to see that the carriage was here to take us home. I shall let the coachman know, to-morrow morning, that if he wants to keep his situation he will have to mind what he is about,' said Mr. Howard, wrathfully.

Linda made no reply. Her attention was fully taken up by an eager scrutiny of the streets through which they were now passing, and which did not, by their appearance, in any way mitigate the unfavourable impression she had already received of the metropolis. She could find little to admire in Regent Street and Piccadilly, where the shops were closed, though it was still broad daylight; Park Lane presented no more cheerful an aspect than it is wont to wear on an evening in the latter end of August; and indeed it must be confessed that a progress, in a jolting cab, through the west end of London, at that season of the year, is not calculated to rouse any other sentiment in the breast of a stranger than one of extreme melancholy.

After what seemed to Linda an interminable drive, Lancaster Gate was at length reached, and the cab drove up before the door of number 250, a corner house, and a sufficiently imposing structure. The door was opened by a portly butler, who tripped down the steps, followed by a footman in mourning livery.

'We should have sent the carriage to meet you, ma'am,' said the former functionary, addressing himself to Linda; 'but we was not sure by which train you was to arrive.'

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- 'I told Mr. Deane that we should reach Charing Cross at 5.40,' interrupted Mr. Howard. 'Didn't he let you know?'
- 'We have not had no horders from Mr. Deane upon the subject, ma'am,' said the butler, still looking at Linda, and thus manifesting his acquaintance with the intention of his late master's will. He was a man of experience, and he thought it best to avoid misconception at the outset.

Linda, in some confusion, replied that it was of no consequence, and entered her new home, without daring to look at her father.

She was met, in the hall, by the housekeeper, a grave, elderly personage, in black silk, who greeted her new mistress with a curtsey and a swift, scrutinising glance.

- 'We have got the best bedroom ready for you, ma'am,' said she. 'We thought as perhaps you might not like to ockipy the room where poor Mr. 'Oward died.'
- 'Oh, no,' said Linda, with a slight shiver;
 'I should not like that at all.'
 - 'So we thought, ma'am,' answered the house-

keeper, with a faint, superior smile. 'Shall I show you your room?'

- 'Thank you,' said Linda, nervously; 'but papa—Mr. Howard—I hope you have given him the best room.'
- 'We have prepared a bedroom and dressingroom close to yours for the gentleman, ma'am,' answered the housekeeper.
- 'Thank you,' said Linda again, meekly. She would have liked to say that she wished her father to be treated as the master of the house; but she felt shy and awkward, and was considerably overawed by the respectful solemnity of her new servants. And indeed she never succeeded, either then or at any subsequent time, in establishing the slightest authority over Mrs. Tester, the housekeeper, and Hudson, the butler. These two functionaries were worthy, honest people in the main, and afterwards served Linda as faithfully as they had done their late master; but they were naturally anxious to have it understood, from the first, that they were the real controllers of the household, and that any interference with their liberty

of action would bring about their immediate resignation. They occupied a position analogous to that of the responsible ministers of a free country, while Linda filled the easy and simple rôle of a constitutional sovereign. As for Mr. Howard, who, to carry out the parallel, must be likened to a King Consort, it is evident that his part was a more difficult one to play; and it cannot be said that he invariably acquitted himself of it in a manner to give satisfaction either to himself or to those about him. this first evening, however, perhaps because he thought it best to wait until his position should be more clearly defined, or perhaps because he too had been a trifle cowed by the magnificent condescension of Hudson, he showed himself amiable and conciliatory, and made no further allusion to his intended rebuke to the coachman.

After breakfast, the next morning, Mr. Deane made his appearance. He was a merry little fresh-coloured man of sixty or thereabouts, very rich, very prosperous, and very goodnatured. The world had always treated him

so well that he, in return, entertained an excellent opinion of it and its inhabitants, and was always anxious to be upon the best of terms with everybody. And in this kindly aim he was usually successful. Nevertheless he had not been five minutes in the big, stately drawing-room at Lancaster Gate before he perceived that it would be a hard matter for him to maintain friendly relations with Mr. Howard.

The very first proposition made by that gentleman, after it had been explained that Linda would not have the right to touch the principal of her inheritance till she should have attained the age of thirty—and not then, if she should have married before reaching that age—caused the worthy solicitor to hold up his hands in amazement and consternation.

'The interest of the money,' Mr. Howard said, quite calmly, 'had better be paid in to my account. That will save all further trouble.'

'To your account!' exclaimed the astonished trustee. 'Really, Mr. Howard, I don't think you can have quite understood the terms of the will. Your daughter is the sole heiress of her

uncle's estate, and is the only person entitled to profit by it.'

'It is you, Mr. Deane, who misunderstand me,' returned Mr. Howard, loftily. 'I have no desire to make any personal profit out of the money left to my daughter; but I do claim the right of a parent to administer her affairs for her. I believe I am correct in saying that I am her legal guardian, at least so long as she continues under age.'

'In a certain sense, of course,' assented Mr. Deane.

'In every sense, I should have thought. Indeed, it stands to reason that she is not capable of regulating her own expenditure. Surely she might give me a power of attorney——'

'Quite out of the question, I assure you—quite out of the question!' interrupted Mr. Deane, hastily. 'The executors could never consent to such an arrangement; it would be going entirely against the intentions of the testator.'

In truth the late Mr. Thomas Howard, speaking with the admirable frankness which had been one of the most prominent characteristics of that eminent man of business, had repeatedly referred to his brother, in Mr. Deane's hearing, as an unconscionable vagabond, whom he would not trust with a five-pound note.

'Do you mean to tell me, then,' said Mr. Howard, planting himself on the hearthrug, with his back to the empty fireplace, and glaring down angrily at his opponent, 'that a mere child, like Linda, is to be given undisputed control over thousands of pounds, and that I am not to have a word to say as to how she is to spend them?'

'I should not put it in that way,' replied Mr. Deane, willing to keep the peace. 'No doubt your advice and assistance would always be valuable; and I am sure,' he added pleasantly, turning to Linda, who had hitherto taken no part in the colloquy, and looked particularly alarmed and unhappy—'I am sure Miss Howard will consult her papa upon all matters of importance. But certainly, in the eyes of the law, the interest of the money is hers to do what she likes with.'

'I never heard of such a thing in my life!' exclaimed Mr. Howard. 'It is utterly preposterous and ridiculous! I never gave my brother credit for much common sense; but at least he knew how to look after his money; and nothing will induce me to believe that he intended to leave it in the hands of a girl just out of the schoolroom, and to deprive me of all authority over it.'

'From my personal knowledge,' replied Mr. Deane, now, in his turn, a little heated, 'I am able to say that that is precisely what he did intend.'

'I never heard of such a thing in my life!' began Mr. Howard again.

But here Linda interposed—

'If I can really do what I choose with the money,' she said, 'I should like to hand it over to papa as it is paid to me.'

Mr. Deane said he didn't think that would do at all.

- 'But can I do it, if I like?' persisted Linda.
- 'My dear young lady,' answered Mr. Deane, slowly and gravely, 'there is nothing to pre-

vent you from bestowing every farthing you receive from us upon the crossing-sweeper outside your door, or from throwing it into the Thames; but when I tell you that your uncle, to whose wishes you will allow that you owe some consideration, especially desired that you should retain the management of your income, and when I add that your father could not possibly accept the gift which you propose to make to him without laying himself open to insinuations of the most unpleasant kind, I trust you will see the impropriety of adopting the course you speak of. Come,' he added, more lightly, 'let us look at the question reasonably. I quite understand your feeling. You shrink from the responsibility connected with the possession of a large fortune: you think both you and your father are placed in a false position by the money having been left to you, and not to him. Very natural, I'm sure! Well, but these responsibilities have been awarded to you by Providence; you can't escape from them; and, dear me! there are worse misfortunes than coming into eighteen thousand a-year. Now, I fancy



that much of the difficulty of the position might be removed—it is no part of my business to advise you, of course; but perhaps you will excuse me for making a suggestion—I think, in short, that some provision—some allowance might be made ____ ' Mr. Deane paused, diffidently; but happening at this juncture to raise his eyes to Mr. Howard's face, he caught a look which encouraged him to continue with more 'I should recommend that you confidence. make your father such an allowance as, together with his own income, will enable him to live, as it were, independently of you. I think in this way a good deal of awkwardness and uncomfortableness might be obviated.'

Mr. Howard, in a tone of gentle melancholy, regretted that his motives had been so entirely misconstrued. In proposing to take charge of his daughter's income for her he had been actuated by no other wish than that she should be freed from a task for which neither her nature nor her education had fitted her. After what Mr. Deane had said about unpleasant insinuations, he felt it due to himself to

withdraw all claim in that direction; but it would be a satisfaction to him, in the future, to remember that he had done what in him lay to oppose an arrangement which he must still consider most foolish and imprudent. With reference to the question of an allowance to himself, he would only ask Mr. Deane how he would like to be put upon an allowance by his daughter?

Mr. Deane smiled, rubbed his hands cheerfully, and said, 'Upon my word, I don't think I should mind; I don't indeed, Mr. Howard.'

'No? Then you must pardon me for saying, Mr. Deane, that you are a little—well, well, never mind. Possibly I may be over-sensitive; but the idea of being pensioned by my own daughter is not agreeable to me. I shall do very well with what I have; and I cannot consent to receive anything more.'

Nevertheless he did consent. At Linda's earnest and tearful entreaty he consented, in the end, to accept the sum of three thousand a year, which, considering that he had the prospect of being fed and lodged in his daughter's

house for an indefinite period, might be held to be an ample allowance for clothes, cigars, and menus plaisirs. Mr. Deane thought it excessive, and did not hesitate to say so. Nor did he fail to warn Mr. Howard that Linda, being an infant, could enter into no contract binding against herself. But, perceiving that no remonstrances on his part were likely to have the smallest effect, he wisely abstained from further opposition; and, after glancing at his watch, and remarking that he had only just time to catch the train for Croydon, where his country house was situated, he bade a cordial farewell to Miss Howard, and a rather more distant one to her father, and departed.

'The girl is a good little soul,' remarked Mr. Deane, when he was sitting with his wife, that evening, in the garden, after dinner; 'but the old man is a sharp practitioner. He gave me a good deal of bother this morning; and, somehow or other, I rather think he got what he wanted in the end.'

CHAPTER XI.

BRIGHTON.

One gusty, sunny afternoon in October, a good deal of attention was excited among the walkers and drivers along the sea-front, at Brighton, by the appearance of a brand-new barouche drawn by a pair of showy bay horses, whose harness displayed rather more plating than was quite consistent with good taste. The coachman on the box, and the powdered footman who sat, massive and majestic, at his side, were clad in mourning; but no effort had been spared to render their black liveries as magnificent as epaulettes and a profusion of twisted cord and aiguillettes could make them; and, upon the whole, the appearance of the servants might be said to be worthy of the horses, the carriage, and the elderly gentleman of benign

aspect who reclined upon its cushions, holding his cigar between the tips of his lavender-kidded fingers.

Those who did not recognise this sublime personage made haste to inquire who the fine-looking man in the Astracan-trimmed coat might be; and generally received some such answer as—'Oh, don't you know? That's Howard, the millionaire. Made oceans of money in America, out of petroleum, or something. They say he's going to settle twenty thousand a year on his daughter the day she marries.'

For, though the Howard menage had now been nearly two months established in Brighton, it was not generally known that the daughter, not the father, was the owner of the fortune in question, nor had the amount of that fortune, or the means of its acquirement, as yet transpired—some asserting that it was the result of sheep-farming, others insisting that it had sprung from oil-wells, while not a few declared that Mr. Howard had begun life with the traditional half-crown, and had arrived at his

present pinnacle of prosperity after years of careful and astute financing.

Brighton had, after some hesitation, been selected by Mr. Howard as the most desirable place in which to pass the remainder of the summer and the autumn. Linda, had she been consulted, would have preferred Scotland or Wales: but Mr. Howard had not allowed his authority to be in any way weakened by the conversation with Mr. Deane, recorded in the last chapter; nor, for that matter, did the young heiress desire anything better than that, in this and all other things, her father should follow the bent of his own inclinations. He chose Brighton principally because he hungered and thirsted after display, and longed to exhibit his newly-acquired wealth to an admiring world. It was he who had persuaded Linda to part with her late uncle's old-fashioned carriages and portly coachman, and to substitute for them the barouche and the gorgeous domestics described above.

Linda was a little shy of appearing in this resplendent equipage. Whenever she made use

of it, she had an uncomfortable impression that the eyes of all the passers-by were riveted upon her, and that there was as much of satire as of admiration in their gaze. Therefore, if she could discover any plausible excuse for escaping from the daily penance which her father sought to inflict upon her, she gladly took advantage of it. Upon such occasions Mr. Howard issued forth upon his afternoon drive alone. in nowise afraid of being laughed at. knew that to the well-regulated British mind there is nothing so noble, so dignified, so worthy of all respect as wealth; and in the security engendered by this conviction, he willingly paraded himself, his fur-trimmed coat, and his daughter's fine carriage and horses before the eyes of all Brighton, by the hour together.

If, after a turn or two, he got tired of his own company, and yearned after congenial companionship, he had no difficulty in satisfying his craving. Acquaintances of both sexes were always ready to accept the vacant seats in the barouche; for when did a moneyed man ever want for friends? Mr. Howard had not been a

week in Brighton before this and that one, who remembered to have met him abroad, called, or left their cards at the new and imposing house which, by his request, Linda had engaged at a ruinous monthly rental, and whither she had transferred her household. These, in their turn, introduced their friends; so that, ere long, Miss Howard's visiting-list swelled itself to a portentous length.

But despite this increase of acquaintance, Linda was as devoid of intimate friends in her new station as she had been in the old days at Blasewitz. Few of the ladies who called upon her seemed to care about advancing beyond the boundary line of ordinary civility, and such as did frequent the house were rather her father's friends than her own, and, in truth, were scarcely the people whom she would herself have chosen as familiar associates. Chief among them was a certain Mrs. Williams, a rich widow, who, with her two daughters, had known Mr. Howard slightly at Baden, some years previously, and who had now pitched her wandering tent at Brighton for a season.

Williams was what in these days is called a lady, inasmuch as she was very well off, did not drop her h's, and had been presented at Court: but it would have been difficult to discover in her any further claims to gentility. She was a good-natured, vulgar, over-dressed woman, fond of money and titles, and sincerely respectful to all who owned either of these advantages; lavish of compliments to those who ranked an inch or two higher than herself in the social scale, and honestly rude to such as she conceived to be her inferiors. In a word. a thoroughly commonplace and estimable person, who might have got on better in society had she not been afflicted with a red face, a spherical figure, and an unfortunate propensity to cover herself with jewellery during the daytime. Her daughters were so completely her counterparts in every essential particular, that it seems scarcely worth while to describe them more minutely.

With people of this stamp Linda could have little in common. Her eye was shocked by the horrible gaudiness of their attire as

much as her taste was offended by their outspoken flattery, and their shrill cries of delight over her newly-purchased wardrobe. The real or feigned ecstacies of the young ladies at the sight of her dresses and ornaments seemed to her to savour more of impertinence than of compliment; and she was utterly put out of countenance when their mother, meaning to be agreeable, assured her that she was an uncommonly pretty girl, and that her Pa was the handsomest and best-dressed man in Brighton.

Mr. Howard, however, being of a less sensitive temperament, thought Mrs. Williams a charming woman, and was never weary of her society. Day after day he discovered some pretext for asking her and her daughters to luncheon or dinner; and soon they came to feel themselves so much at home with him that they took to dropping in, between one and two o'clock, whenever they felt so inclined, and without waiting for any formal invitation to do so.

'I do dislike ceremony,' Mrs. Williams would sometimes remark. 'What I always

say is, I like to see my acquaintances at dinner, and my friends at lunch. I hope you and your Pa, my dear, will never forget that when you happen to find yourselves near my house in the middle of the day.' And Maria and Sophy would murmur a chorus of assent to the hospitable wish.

It was upon these not over-refined persons that Linda found herself chiefly dependent for female society during the first few months of her sojourn at Brighton. Visitors of the opposite sex were more numerous, and perhaps of a somewhat higher standing. Heiresses are seldom suffered to remain long in obscurity, or to languish for lack of admirers. A few hardworked barristers refreshing their jaded systems with the sea-breezes; a Government clerk or two, and half-a-dozen or so of idle men, with expensive tastes and limited incomes, took an early opportunity of seeking out Mr. Howard, and were welcomed by him with his customary geniality. Each of them strove, by means of small attentions, to ingratiate himself with the fortunate Linda, who, for her part, was nothing

loth to receive their advances, and thought them all very polite and agreeable young men. The 112th Dragoon Guards, which distinguished corps was at that time quartered at Brighton, hastened to cast itself, so to speak, at the feet of this favoured young lady. Not a man of them, from the colonel, who was still a bachelor, to the youngest sub-lieutenant, but would willingly have sacrificed his liberty, and bowed his meek neck under the matrimonial yoke for her sake. Captain Browne spent a small fortune in providing her with flowers, and making preposterous bets of gloves with her, which nothing short of a miracle could have saved him from losing. Captain Greene put himself to an immensity of trouble and inconvenience to secure for her a pair of ponies of showy action, perfect docility, and warranted safe to drive for a lady inexperienced in the art of handling the ribbons. And poor young Whyte, who, in the despair engendered by a calamitous Ascot and Goodwood, had betrothed himself to a wealthy but ill-favoured Scotch lady, actually went so far as to write to Glasgow to break off his

engagement, upon the hazard of his handsome face finding favour in the eyes of the beautiful Miss Howard. For, as he sapiently observed, when a fellow is going in for that kind of thing, hang it all! he might as well have good looks as well as coin; he didn't see why he shouldn't have as good a chance as anybody else—bad luck couldn't last for ever; and, if the worst came to the worst, there was always the possibility of exchanging into the feet, and going out to India.

It is melancholy to think that so much unselfish devotion should have been utterly thrown away; but so it was. Linda's peace of mind was in nowise endangered by the assiduous attentions of these honest gentlemen, though she liked them all very well, and enjoyed the novelty of listening to their simple ideas and somewhat slangy talk.

As for Mr. Howard, he was delighted with the 112th. He had known the regiment, he said, in former years, and was very glad to meet it again, though all his old friends were either dead or had left the service. He was

much pleased at receiving an invitation to dine at mess, and was so late in returning home after that festivity, that Linda had been asleep for hours before he let himself in with his latch-key. She was roused out of her slumbers that night by a prolonged rattle and crash, followed by the sound of imprecations not loud but deep. It was only papa's bedroom candlestick, which had somehow eluded his grasp, and had gone clattering all the way down-stairs, leaving him to find his way to bed, as best he could, in the dark. And the next morning, the imperturbable Hudson announced that 'Mr. 'Oward's man had told him that his master would take his breakfast in his own room, as he was feeling rather hunwell.' Linda was for running upstairs at once to find out what was the matter; but Hudson respectfully interposed.

'I think you will find, ma'am,' said he, with an unmoved countenance, 'that Mr. 'Oward would rather not be disturbed just at present. He will be able to come down by luncheontime, I dessay.' And Linda humbly resumed her seat. Hudson, if he had chosen, could have told her that this was not the first time that Mr. Howard had been thus 'hunwell' in the morning, though, as it happened, it was the first time that he had failed to put in an appearance at the breakfast-table. But Hudson was discreet, and kept his own counsel upon many matters.

The truth is that prosperity, which exercises all sorts of different influences upon different natures, had had a somewhat whimsical effect upon Mr. Howard, and one which could scarcely have been foretold in the case of a man of his time of life. After having, for many years and through various vicissitudes of fortune, led a life which, if not irreproachable, was at least methodical and outwardly decent, he had now returned to most of the follies and vices of his youth. Possibly his character may have been of that kind which exhibits itself in its best light during periods of adversity; or it may be that a certain unconscious adaptability of disposition, which had led him, quite naturally, to assume the air and dress of a virtuous père de famille at Dresden, caused him, on his return to

affluence, to fall back instinctively into the habits which he had been accustomed, in earlier years, to associate therewith. Some people knowingly or unknowingly—are perpetually playing parts, from their cradle to their deathbed. Very likely they can't help themselves; and ought only to be pitied for having an exaggerated sense of the fitness of things, as others are who find themselves irresistibly impelled to pocket the forks and spoons when they go out It is a mental disease, which does to dinner. not, however, incapacitate the sufferer from holding high offices, and making his mark in Be this as it may, it is certain that the world. no sooner did Mr. Howard find himself once more in England, once more free from restraint and responsibility, and once more the possessor of a handsome income, than, as if by a natural consequence of the change in his circumstances, he reverted to the very same kind of life which had brought about a breach between him and his father in the year 1825, or thereabouts. He abandoned the sober, respectable frock-coat and stick-up collars which he had adhered to

during the whole of his long residence abroad, in favour of a more youthful and fashionable style of dress; he took to drinking brandies-and-sodas and sherries-and-bitters at all sorts of odd hours; he spent the greater part of his time in one of the Brighton clubs; and left his daughter alone for days together in order that he might attend all the principal race-meetings.

It was after one of these periodical absences that Linda, coming down in the morning to welcome her father on his return, found herself confronted by a singular and startling apparition. Upon the hearth-rug, trimming his nails with a pen-knife, stood the exact semblance of Mr. Howard, save that his hair, instead of being grey, was brilliant yellow, that he wore no whiskers, and that his moustache stuck out, on either side of his mouth, in two carefully-waxed spikes. That there was nothing supernatural about this surprising being was presently proved, by his exclaiming peevishly—

'For Heaven's sake, Linda, don't stand staring there, like a stuck pig! What in the world are you gaping at?' Linda could only ejaculate, 'Papa!' in a tone of the most profound amazement.

'I suppose you think I have dyed my hair,' said Mr. Howard. 'I don't know why the deuce I shouldn't, if I like; but, as it happens, I have not. I have simply restored it to its natural colour by means of a preparation recommended to me. It was quite absurd that I should go grey so early in life; but it is in my family, I believe.'

Linda poured out the tea silently. She could not truthfully say that she thought the change in her father's appearance an improvement; nor was it pleasant to be likened to a stuck pig. Times were changed since Mr. Howard had got up early in the morning to buy flowers for her in the Brussels market; changed, too—and not altogether for the better—since the days when he had been a strict and exacting, but not unkind father, rating her sharply for small shortcomings, but never rude and contemptuous, as he had become of late.

The fact was, that Mr. Howard had adopted juvenile habits at a period of life at which the

strongest constitution declines to be trifled with. Nature rebelled against the anachronism, and sent swift punishment upon the offender, in the shape of shortness of temper, frequent headaches, and a shaking hand. Linda watched him, as he sat opposite to her drinking his tea, and perceived how much he had aged, in spite of the restoration of his hair to its original tint.

'By-the-by,' he said, carelessly, when breakfast was over, 'I wish you would oblige me with five hundred pounds, Linda. I have come to utter grief over this Houghton meeting, and upon my word, if I don't manage to get hold of five hundred or so, I shall find myself rather in Queer-street.'

Linda went to her davenport, took out her new cheque-book, and wrote a cheque for the sum required. Then she approached her father, holding out the slip of paper, and looking up into his face, perhaps in the expectation that he would kiss her, as he had sometimes been used to do when she had pleased him; but he did not appear to notice the movement, and, taking the cheque with a brief 'thanks,' thrust it into his pocket, and sauntered out of the room.

Linda did not see him again that day; nor did any visitor appear, to enliven her solitude and raise her flagging spirits. She had absolutely nothing to do with herself; she did not care to drive out alone; and spent a long day principally in pitying herself-not wholly without cause. The novelty of having a fine house, carriages, servants, and an overflowing exchequer had already worn off; and, on the other hand, it seemed to Linda that money had robbed her of her father's affection, and had not brought her one single friend. It was at this time that she began once more to long for the sound of Mainwairing's violin, and to wonder when she should see him again.

CHAPTER XII.

'MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, LORD STURDHAM.'

'DEAR me!' said Mr. Howard. 'Well, really now, Linda, I think we ought to call upon them.'

As he spoke he laid down the Brighton newspaper, in which he had just read the following brief announcement:—

'The Earl and Countess of Sturdham have arrived at the Bedford Hotel upon what we believe is likely to be a lengthened stay in Brighton.'

'What sort of people are they, papa?' asked Linda, when her father had explained to whom he referred. She had frequently heard of 'my brother-in-law, Lord Sturdham,' but she had never looked forward to the possibility of meeting him face to face, nor ever thought of this 'MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, LORD STURDHAM' 307
unknown uncle except as a grand and awful abstraction.

'Well, to tell you the truth, my dear, I don't exactly know,' answered Mr. Howard, candidly. 'There was a coolness between us years ago—at the time when I married your poor mother, you know—and what with that, and my living abroad, and all, I have never had any communication with the present Lord Sturdham. I recollect him, in old days, as a rough-and-ready, hard-riding sort of fellow, who was not over and above civil to me; but I never saw much of him. He was not married in those days, and went very little into ladies' society—where I,' added Mr. Howard, with a glance at the mirror, 'was always a good deal in request.'

'And has he never made any effort to see you since?' asked Linda.

'Oh, no,' replied Mr. Howard. 'Why should he?'

'Then I should not take the trouble to call upon him. Very likely he will only be rude to us if we do go.'

Mr. Howard's slight knowledge of Lord

Sturdham's character disposed him to consider this by no means an impossible contingency; but he was not blind to the advantages of having an earl for a brother-in-law, and long habit had made him impervious to small slights. He thought it was at least worth while to try and make friends with his noble relative; so he answered with an air of virtuous dignity all his own—

'My dear Linda, Lord Sturdham can do us neither good nor harm. We are entirely independent of him and his caprices, and can well afford to risk a snub in a good cause. After all, blood is thicker than water; you ought to know your uncle; and I should be sorry to have it said that I had not done my best to clear off old scores.'

This little speech smacked so much more of the papa of old times than of the fast, juvenileelderly gentleman who had of late occupied his place, that Linda went to obey orders with more than her usual alacrity, and thought to herself, while her maid was helping her with her toilet, that Lord Sturdham must be a vindictive man indeed if he could hold out long against her father's fascinations.

Nevertheless, it was with some feeling of relief that she learnt from the waiter at the Bedford Hotel (whither she and her father presently repaired in the carriage) that Lord Sturdham was out, but that Lady Sturdham was at home, and would receive her visitors. Two people ought to be able to hold their own against one, thought Linda, as she followed the waiter up the staircase.

The new-comers were received by a frail little old lady, beautifully dressed, who advanced to meet them, twisting the cards that had just been handed to her nervously between her fingers, and who looked far more alarmed than alarming.

She just touched Linda's glove with the tips of her tiny, jewelled fingers, and then made a quaint, old-fashioned bow, which was almost a curtsey, to Mr. Howard.

That gentleman, however, being determined to take the bull by the horns, was not to be put off in this way. He grasped Lady Sturd-

ham's small white hand in his great red one, and pressed it cordially.

- 'We ought to know each other, Lady Sturdham,' said he. 'I am Henry Howard, poor Helen Blount's husband.'
- 'Oh, yes; I have heard—I know—I am very sorry Lord Sturdham is out,' murmured the little lady, in a tone which seemed to say, 'You are not my relations, you know; and really I think it is hardly fair of you to force your way into my room when my natural protector is absent.' Such, at least, was Linda's interpretation of her meaning.
- 'Well, well, well,' resumed Mr. Howard, settling himself in an arm-chair, and stretching out his legs comfortably before him; 'it is a long time since I last saw your husband.'
- 'Yes; it must be a great many years,' said Lady Sturdham, hurriedly. 'Have you been long in Brighton?' she continued, turning towards Linda, and addressing her with that smiling, but laboured politeness which English ladies are wont to display in the entertainment of unwelcome visitors.

'Nearly two months,' answered Linda, who was already beginning to wish herself out of the room.

'It is a pleasant, lively place in the autumn,' said Lady Sturdham; 'but the high winds and dust are terribly trying, don't you think so? Sometimes I cannot leave the house for days together.'

Linda said the east wind was very disagreeable, and a few more remarks of equally absorbing interest were exchanged. Then came a pause, during which Lady Sturdham was obviously wondering what her visitors wanted, and when they would go away.

Mr. Howard judged this moment appropriate for the delivery of a short speech which he had rehearsed to himself in the carriage, on his way to the hotel. He cleared his voice, stroked his waxed moustache, and began-

'I daresay you know, Lady Sturdham, that your husband and I have not hitherto been upon the best of terms. My marriage with poor dear Helen was not approved of by the family, and differences arose which—which I think we should all now do wisely to forget. Unless he is much changed, Lord Sturdham is, if I may say so, of a somewhat stubborn nature. I also am a proud man; and so long as I felt that my circumstances were such that I could not meet my brother-in-law upon what I may call a footing of equality, I shrank from obtruding myself upon him. But now that my poor brother's death has placed my daughter and myself in a position of—er—affluence, I have no longer the same hesitation in coming forward to hold out the right hand of fellowship, and say—let by-gones be by-gones! You, no doubt, Lady Sturdham, possess great influence with your husband; and I count upon your valuable aid to assist me in putting an end to family dissensions.'

'I am so very sorry that Lord Sturdham is not at home,' began the poor little lady, looking excessively frightened. 'No one is more particular than he about family ties of all kinds. As for myself, really I did not know that there had been any—any quarrel at all. And I am

sure,' she added, turning to Linda, who had become rather hot and uncomfortable during her father's harangue—'I am sure I shall be delighted if I can be of any service to you in any way.'

'Thank you, Lady Sturdham. If you can succeed in removing the estrangement which has existed for so long between my dear wife's family and myself, you will indeed have rendered me the greatest of services,' interposed Mr. Howard, before Linda had time to reply.

Very likely he thought that he was speaking with perfect sincerity, and really imagined, for the moment, that his wife had been dear to him, that his desire to be reconciled to his brother-in-law was not influenced by the circumstance of the latter being a peer of the realm, and that he had acted magnanimously in coming forward to tender the olive-branch of peace.

'I am glad we went,' he said, a few minutes later, when he was once more leaning back on the comfortable carriage-cushions, surveying the sparkling sea, and the long prospect of irregular white houses, and the loungers on the pavement, with his habitual air of complacent patronage. 'I am sure it was the right thing to do.'

- 'But I don't think she was at all glad to see us,' said Linda, dubiously. 'Did you notice how relieved she looked when we got up to go away, and how frightened she seemed to be all the time we were there?'
- 'Nervousness, my dear—nothing but nervousness. She felt the situation trying perhaps—and no wonder. Delicate health, I daresay; but a good little woman, I should think, as ever breathed.'
- 'I am sure Lord Sturdham will be very disagreeable,' said Linda, prophetically.
- 'Oh, dear no! Why should he make himself disagreeable to us? We are not going to ask him to lend us money,' said Mr. Howard, whose experience had perhaps led him to take too restricted a view of the origin of human unfriendliness. 'Besides,' he resumed, 'we have nothing to fear from Lord Sturdham, or anybody else. We have done the civil thing; and if we are not met in a friendly spirit, why

we shall go on our way, and not break our hearts over it.'

This was doubtless a very proper and philosophical way of looking at the matter; but it was not reassuring to Linda, who was too young and too sensitive to contemplate a slight with equanimity. She had a presentiment that Lord Sturdham would be rough and overbearing, and was prepared to receive that nobleman with extreme hauteur if, as she anticipated, he should return her father's call in person.

What she was not prepared for was that he should come without his wife, and that—Mr. Howard being absent on one of his frequent expeditions—she should have to receive the dreaded visitor alone and unsupported.

Linda was no coward; but it must be confessed that when Hudson flung open the drawing-room door, and, with a curt and cruel impassibility, announced—'Hearl of Sturdham,' her heart began to beat very fast, and she regretted most intensely that the laws of politeness precluded her from exclaiming, 'Not at home!' in reply.

She rose slowly from her chair, drew in her breath, and, taking her courage in both hands, awaited events.

A short, thickset old gentleman walked, or rather trotted, into the room, glanced quickly about him, and then, catching sight of Linda, made a dive at her, dropping his hat and stick on the floor, and grasped her hand with so much warmth that she would fain have shrieked for mercy.

'How do you do?—how do you do?' he cried. 'Very glad to welcome you back to England! I must apologise for Lady Sturdham; she has one of her bad headaches to-day, and can't leave the house. Papa not at home, eh? Never mind—see him some other time. And so you are Linda Howard? Dear, dear, dear!'

He had seated himself by this time, and was gazing at Linda with a broad smile on his good-humoured face, while she, too much taken aback to utter a word in reply, returned his scrutiny with interest. She saw before her a stout, baldheaded man, not very much past middle-age,

whose homely features, old-fashioned garb, and healthy red-brown complexion seemed to belong rather to a well-to-do farmer than to the representative of one of the oldest families in England. The reality was so absurdly unlike the creation of her fancy, that she could not keep her face from dimpling into an answering smile as she exclaimed, half involuntarily—

- 'And you are Lord Sturdham?'
- 'Yes, yes; I am your uncle Sturdham. You have a look of poor Helen, though she was never what you could call a pretty woman. Well, you have led a mighty wandering life, but now I hope you are going to settle in the old country.'
- 'Oh, yes, we shall live in England now,' answered Linda.
- 'And how do you like it? Not a bad country, is it?'
- 'I think it is a little dull,' said Linda. Lord Sturdham's unexpected cordiality, and his apparent forgetfulness of the long-standing animosity between his family and Mr. Howard, had quite set her at ease with him.

- 'Dull? Not a bit of it! Brighton is rather dull, I grant you; but Brighton isn't England.'
- 'It is all that I have seen of England, though,' said Linda, 'except a week of London. And I don't think that was much better.'
- 'Much worse, I should say. I hate London. No; you must go to the country if you want to know England as it really is. Some day or other I hope you will pay us a visit at Beechlands. I often go down of an evening to the wire fence at the end of the shrubbery there, where you can get a glimpse of the barley fields, and look at the old trees in the park, and listen to the rooks cawing and fighting in the elms, and wonder whether there is anything in the world to hold a candle to it, in its own quiet way. I don't pretend to be artistic, or to understand much about landscape, and so on: but I know what I like; and I declare I don't think there is a country in Europe fit to compare with England, take it all for all. There are no flower-gardens worthy of the name abroad, for one thing; and they are killing off their singing-birds as fast as they can; and then

look at their houses! I did the grand tour when I was a lad, and saw a good many of their châteaux in France, and Germany, and Italy; but I assure you, though some of them were fine enough places to look at, there wasn't one that I could have lived in and made a home of.'

'You are a regular John Bull, aren't you?' said Linda, smiling. 'You think there are only two species of inhabitants in the world—Englishmen and foreigners.'

'Well, and that is quite true,' said Lord Sturdham, good-humouredly. 'I wouldn't give a fig for a man who didn't think his own country and people superior to any other. I know that England is the first country in the world, but I don't want Frenchmen and Germans to think so. Let them be contented with their own lot, and fancy themselves fine fellows, if they like. Their life wouldn't suit me, but I dare say it suits them; and, depend upon it, God would never have created them Frenchmen and Germans if they had been fit to be anything better. Come, now, tell the

truth; aren't you proud of being an Englishwoman?'

'I suppose I ought to be,' said Linda; 'and yet I don't quite know how I am the better for it. I daresay I should have enjoyed myself much more if I had been born something else. I think England is a more amusing country for gentlemen than for ladies. Papa likes it; but then he is always away, and that makes it dull for me. In Dresden we used to go to concerts or to the theatre; and then there was always the band on the Brühlische Terrasse; but there is nothing of that kind here.'

'Well, there's the band of the 2nd Life Guards going to play this afternoon,' said Lord Sturdham; 'and an uncommonly good band it is too—as good as anything your snuffy foreigners could show you. Why don't you go and hear it?'

'I have no one to go with,' said Linda, with a little sigh.

'No one to go with? Why, no more you have, poor child. I'll tell you what: if you don't mind taking an old fellow like me for

- 'MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, LORD STURDHAM.' 321 cort. we'll go together. What do vou say to
- escort, we'll go together. What do you say to that?'
- 'I should like it very much,' answered Linda, brightening up at the prospect of escaping from her luxurious prison. 'But I don't want to drag you there against your will. It would be a great bore for you, wouldn't it?'
- 'Not a bit of it,' said Lord Sturdham, heartily. 'I enjoy a good band as much as anybody. Go and put on your bonnet and shawl, and we shall get there in time to hear them play the first tune.'

Linda waited for no second invitation, but went off at once to her room, and, having 'put on her bonnet and shawl'—or, at least, gone through the modern equivalent to that process—set out with her new friend; and this oddly-matched couple went to hear the band together, remaining from the beginning to the end of the programme, and deriving a great deal of innocent pleasure therefrom.

Lord Sturdham was delighted with his niece, and told her so with perfect ingenuousness. Indeed, anyone who was young, and

fresh, and natural, might safely count upon delighting this simple old nobleman. Childless himself, he had a great love for young people, and since the joys of paternity were denied him, his pent-up affections found a vent in the direction of his numerous nephews and nieces, by whom he was adored, as uncles munificent in tips and presents usually are. 'Don't call me Lord Sturdham, he said to Linda later in the afternoon. 'Call me Uncle Jim—that is my name with the other young ones.' And Linda willingly promised to do as the others did. Having been, all her life, accustomed to regard herself as alone in the world with her father, it was a novel and pleasurable sensation to her to hear herself classed as one of a large family, and the mention of her cousins roused in her an emotion with which people more abundantly favoured in this respect than she had been might possibly find it difficult to sympathise. Linda knew nothing of the claims of poor relations, and the unpalatable patronage of rich ones: she had never been called upon to listen to the good advice and the benevolent freedom of criticism which it is at once the duty and the privilege of those bound together by family ties to interchange; whereas she had often been oppressed by a sense of her loneliness. There is a very palpable desire on the part of the lower domestic animals to belong to somebody, were it but a drunken costermonger; and signs of a somewhat analogous disposition are not wanting in the human race.

It having transpired, in the course of conversation, that Mr. Howard's absence would be prolonged until the following day, Lord Sturdham insisted that his niece should return to dinner with him at his hotel. There they found Lady Sturdham nursing her headache on a sofa, with the blinds drawn down, and a bottle of smelling-salts at her side. Her husband stepped up to her on creaking tiptoe, and asked her how she felt in a tone of hushed commiseration which was redeemed from absurdity by its evident earnestness. Lady Sturdham replied 'that she was a little better now, thank you, dear; and that she hoped to be able to come down to dinner.' She then welcomed Linda very plea-

santly, and with much more ease of manner than she had displayed on the occasion of Mr. Howard's visit.

'Here is a quiet little niece for you, my dear,' Lord Sturdham said, 'whose voice wilk not be loud enough to make your head ache.'

It was pretty to see how tenderly the bluff old man treated his fragile little wife—how he lowered his loud voice almost to a whisper in addressing her; with what exaggerated care he re-arranged her pillows, and how cautious hewas lest by any sudden movement he should agitate her nerves. She, on her side, seemed to have merged her identity in that of her husband, and to have no other opinions or wishes than his. Throughout the evening she was continually beginning her sentences with-'James thinks'-or 'James has been proposing'-and it was not until Linda had been for some time acquainted with her uncle and aunt that she discovered that James's views were not unfrequently suggested in the first instance by the meek little lady who professed herself so submissive to them.

'I am so glad that you and your Uncle James have made friends, my dear,' said she, when the ladies were alone together after dinner, and Lord Sturdham, with his silk handkerchief over his head, was enjoying a post-prandial nap in the dining-room. 'He has taken a great fancy to you, do you know.'

- 'He is very kind,' said Linda, not quite knowing what reply to make.
- 'Yes, but he is a little difficult to please in the matter of young ladies. He does not like the girls of the present day—and, indeed, no more do I. Sometimes they quite frighten me with the things they say and do. James says it cannot go on, and that we are on the brink of a social revolution, which will make things either worse or better than they are now. I hope you will never be a fast girl, my dear.'

Linda said she had no inclination that way, and Lady Sturdham continued—

'I am so glad of that! James thinks his nieces are sometimes a little too free in their manners with gentlemen—too much disposed to say the first thing that comes into their heads, you know. I daresay they mean no harm, only in my young days it was so different. My dear mother used to say that a lady should always know how to be courteous and agreeable without being familiar; but nowadays familiarity seems quite to have taken the place of courtesy, and I don't think anyone studies the art of conversation.'

The old lady prattled on in this strain for a considerable time, forgetful of her headache in the pleasure of hearing her own voice. For, in spite of her apparent shrinking timidity, Lady Sturdham was disposed to be loquacious when she could get hold of a good listener, such as she had now obtained. Linda was quite content to accept this modest rôle, and to take no more than a monosyllabic part in the conversation. There was something very attractive to her in this pretty grey-haired lady, who seemed to carry an atmosphere of refinement about with her, and whose silks, and laces, and jewels harmonised so fitly with her whole

being that unobservant people would hardly have noticed how expensively she was clad.

Yet, much as Linda admired her delicate, beautiful aunt, she thought, upon the whole, that she liked Uncle Jim the best of the two.

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